The Rector's Chronicle

A Newsletter of the Church of St Michael the Archangel

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October, 2011

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

We return to "winter" schedule next Sunday, the Sixteenth after Trinity, October 9th. This means (as I'm sure you know by now), a Low Mass at 8 and Sung Mass at 10. After our one week foray to the National Catholic Bioethics Center, we will be back at Ivy Hall for the foreseeable future. There are no other conflicts presently on the horizon. The regular coffee hour also resumes in the lovely Ivy Hall dining room: speak with Angela Johnson if you would like to help. As you might expect, the weekday Masses continue at the rectory Oratory: Tuesday and Thursday at 6 p.m., Wednesday at 10 a.m. (with healing), Friday at 8 a.m., and Saturday at 9:30 a.m. All Saints' and All Souls' are coming up the beginning of November. The Mass on All Saints', Tuesday, November 1st will be at 6 p.m. The All Souls' Requiem will be at 10 on November 2nd. Forms for All Souls' are enclosed. Christian names are sufficient. Please return them before All Souls' Day.

Angels

October begins during the Octave of our Feast of Title, and is dedicated to the Holy Angels. Angels appear frequently in the pages of Scripture, most often as messengers (which is what "angels" means) of God to man. God sends angels to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samson's parents, Daniel, Tobit, (among many others) and, of course, to Zachariah and the Blessed Virgin. These angels make themselves visible to man, and communicate God's will. God uses them as His ministers for our benefit. The same is true of our Guardian Angels. These are appointed to help us, especially to help us overcome temptations. Their pattern is set by God's angel who led Israel through the wilderness after they left Egypt. Moses warned them, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." (Exodus 23:21) This tells us two things about the angels. First, they are perfectly conformed to God's will. They do His bidding, instantly and joyfully. This is a good example for us! Second, and in part as a result, they partake of God's holiness: "my name is in him." As His ministers, they represent Him, and that representation extends to His character and not just to His messages. Like the willing conformity to His will, this, too should be characteristic of God's earthly ministers, though not in the perfection of the angels. Ministers are called to partake of God's holy character.

So the first movement of the angels is from God to man. God sends them to us for our good. So it is reasonable and proper for us to pray for our homes (in the collect for Compline), "Let thy holy angels dwell herein to preserve us in peace." We should seek their protection, and be grateful for it when it is given.

There is also an angelic movement in the other direction. The angels present our prayers before God. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Revelation 8:3-4) In other words, the angels are given a share in Christ's intercessory work. They unite our prayers with the sacrificial offering symbolized by the altar in St John's vision. They help us by going to God for us, as well as coming from Him.

Perhaps most important is the third way in which God wills for the angels to assist us. Christ tells us, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (St Matthew 18:10) The angels behold the face of God, not just for themselves but for us. We prepare in this life for the Beatific Vision: that is our calling. We may even in this life have a glimmer from time to time. But "our" angels already and constantly partake of the vision. We partake by their means: we are not yet able to bear the vision, but it is already ours through our angels. They see for us. This gives us a real if partial participation now – as through a glass darkly. We are intended for the vision of God. The angels help us to prepare to see it ourselves. Through the ministry of the angels, God draws us towards it – towards Himself – all part of that "wonderful order" of angels and men in His creation.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the

heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.

Adult Forum

On the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, October 16th, there will be an adult forum for a half hour after the ten o'clock Mass. The subject will be "open" and "closed" Communion: whether (and why) the church restricts access to Holy Communion. Until recently most churches, Protestant as well as Catholic, practiced "closed" Communion, generally limiting Communion to their own members. Now most mainline Protestant denominations as well as the new Evangelicals practice "open" Communion. This forum will look at the differences, and the reasons behind them.

While as of this writing there have been no great developments on the Ordinariate front, I will share what news there is before the adult forum on the 16th. It does appear that the timetable may be somewhat longer than we have expected. For this reason, we are planning to start the catechism class in November rather than October. As I mentioned last month, it will be based on the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, in case you would like to get a head start on the reading. For your convenience, I have copies available after Mass on Sundays ($13.60; list is $25).

There is a monthly intercession cycle for the congregations heading towards the Ordinariate available at Fr Andrew Bartus' blog: http://anglicanpatrimony.blogspot.com/. Fr Bartus is currently a priest of the Traditional Anglican Communion, and serves as curate at the Church of St Mary of the Angels in Hollywood, California. I encourage you to join in praying for the Ordinariate – especially for the faithfulness of those hoping to enter it, for its timely formation, and for its sound fidelity to the fulness of the Anglican Patrimony.

Service

At the Last Supper, Jesus explains to His disciples that "I am among you as he that serveth." (St Luke 22:27) He humbles Himself to take on the lowly service of sinners, which includes not only forgiving them and healing them, but also dying for them. While it is always worthwhile for us to ponder what He has done for us, in being a servant to us, it is also worth remembering that He has set us an example. As He serves us, so we are to serve one another. This is particularly important with those who do not know Him. There may be a number of people whom God puts in our lives to whom for one reason or another we cannot speak directly of Christ. These are still people whom we can serve, by doing them good, whether they ask for it or not, whether they recognize it or not. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (St Matthew 25:40) Service is often the foundation for Evangelism. If you are concerned about spreading the good news of Christ (and we all should be), this is a good way to start.

Shoe Boxes

We plan to assemble the annual shoe box Christmas gift project on Sunday, November 13th, during coffee hour. These are sent as Christmas presents to children around the world through the Samaritan's Purse charity. A list of suggested items is available on Sunday or at the rectory – small toys, toothpaste and brushes, markers, pads, hard candy, etc. (No pencils this year, please.) We also need contributions of $7 per box for shipping, and some shoe boxes. Samaritan's Purse adds a booklet explaining Christmas to each box. Speak with Beth if you have any questions.

Kudos

Thanks goes this month to:

- Mark Bradford and the folk at the National Catholic Bioethics Center for accommodating our worship on October 2nd.
- Fr Harold Minor for supplying for me on September 25th so I could take some time off.
- the Wednesday Bible study folk who stayed after class to do last month's *Chronicle* mailing.

Also apologies as well as thanks to Elizabeth LaRue, Michael's daughter, who helped with the move from West Laurel Hill to Ivy Hall. Last month I mistakenly thanked Stephanie (her mother) rather than Elizabeth.

Faithfully,

David Ousley