

THE RECTOR'S CHRONICLE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Please take note of a couple of up-coming schedule changes. On December 4th, the later Sunday Mass will move from ten to nine-thirty. This will allow everyone to get home about the same time as usual even with the catechesis class which follows the Mass. The classes get started shortly after Mass (allowing time to get some coffee), and last about 45 minutes. I'm grateful for the willingness of everyone to stay and participate. Attendance has been great, the questions have been good ones, our discussions lively. If you need a copy of the text (the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*) or the course outline, please let me know. If you miss a class, I will be happy to provide you with a recording, either by email or on a CD.

Also on December 4th, there will be no eight o'clock Mass, due to a conflict at Ivy Hall. After that the regular schedule on Sundays will be eight and nine-thirty. No changes to the weekday Mass schedule at this time.

On Christmas Eve, a Saturday this year, there will be a Sung Mass at 6:30 p.m. at Ivy Hall (confessions at 5:30). On Christmas Day, there will be a single Mass, at the rectory Oratory, at 9:30. Please note that there will be no Masses at Ivy Hall on Christmas Day. The regular schedule (8 & 9:30) resumes on January 1st, the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord. There will be no catechesis on December 25th or January 1st. For St Stephen's Day and St John the Evangelist (December 26th and 27th), Mass will be at 6 p.m. at the rectory Oratory. The Holy Innocents Mass (December 28th) will be at 10 a.m.

This year's Advent Quiet Day is scheduled for Saturday, December 10th, beginning with Mass at 9:30, and ending by 2. As in the recent past, we will avail ourselves of the kind hospitality of All Saints' Church, Montgomery Avenue at Gypsy Lane in Wynnewood. A light breakfast after Mass will be provided, before the silence begins. Please provide your own lunch. There will be opportunity for confession between the addresses. (Advent is a good time for confession!) You are also welcome to bring friends.

Ordinariate

There is real news (for once) on the Ordinariate front. The establishment of the American Anglican Ordinariate has been announced, and is to occur on January 1, 2012. So the end of the waiting is in sight. At that point, the priest or bishop who will be the new Ordinary will be named, and assume responsibility for the continuing work of getting the Ordinariate up and running. This means that the answers to the various practical questions should be forthcoming in due course, though it would be unreasonable to expect everything immediately! We can expect to find out more about the process for a parish to seek an entrance into the Ordinariate, and the timetable involved. This will help us to know what lies ahead, and how we should proceed. We need to remember that the new Ordinary begins with an Ordinariate which exists only on paper: no priests (some are in various stages of the process), no congregations, no financial resources, no office, etc. He will have his work cut out for him. I would ask you to be praying between now and then, both for the Holy Father, who will choose the Ordinary, and for the Ordinary himself.

Chronicle

Since we are now an entire decade (almost) into the 21st century, it might be time for a minor update to the *Rector's Chronicle*. Not (alas) in content, but in delivery. I will be happy to begin sending it in electronic form to any who are willing to receive it that way, rather than in its paper form through the mail. This will get it to you a little more quickly, and will save St Michael's on the postage (which is due to go up again). If I can interest you in the electronic form, kindly send me the email you would like me to use. Please send it to dao@anglicanphiladelphia.org. I will not share the addresses with anyone, and yours will not appear to the others receiving *Chronicle* electronically. I'll plan to start with the January issue. Many thanks!

Wednesday Bible Study

We reach a milestone in the Wednesday Bible study this month: we finish the book of Isaiah. It has taken us a while, as not only is it a long book, but since it is poetry and prophecy, it is not always a quick read. I would note two things which have come through in our study. First, throughout the book, Isaiah's vision keeps together the wondrous restoration of all things at the end of the age – the peaceable kingdom, the new Jerusalem – with God's judgment and the punishment of sin. Both go together. The one is not possible without the other. The Kingdom of God can only follow the moral restoration, which requires that sin be manifested for what it is, and receive the punishment it deserves. There is no cheap grace. The great in-gathering of the nations, which Isaiah holds up before our eyes, requires that evil be unmasked and put to right.

The second theme which we have noticed is how Christological Isaiah is. There is perhaps no book of the Old Testament more thoroughly focused on Christ. From the description of His birth (“A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son”) to the all too graphic description of the atoning Suffering Servant (“Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”), Isaiah holds in his vision the coming Savior and His work. The whole of the Gospel, from incarnation to atonement, can be read in Isaiah. Both of Christ's comings (His incarnation, and His return at the end of the age) are there presented. Not surprisingly, Isaiah is traditionally read in the Daily Office in Advent.

Since Isaiah provides much of the imagery as well as the substance for the Revelation of St John which concludes the New Testament, this seems an opportune time to turn our Wednesday attentions to Revelation. That book, like Apocalyptic literature in general, presents significant challenges to a proper interpretation, and its study is not to be undertaken without a certain trepidation – and humility. Please come and join us (you can also call in). The class meets Wednesday, 11-12 at the rectory.

Stewardship

Our annual Stewardship meeting is set for the Third Sunday in Advent, December 11th, after the 9:30 Mass at Ivy Hall. We will share the usual financial update, and hear from one of our members about what St Michael's means personally – something which has proved especially precious to many of us over the years. We will also give out pledge cards, and ask that you return them before the end of the year. Obviously, things are institutionally even more unsettled than they were last year at this time. With the Ordinarate due to begin on January 1st, the light is at the end of the tunnel. I know that some parishioners have reached a decision about the Ordinarate, pro or con. Others are still weighing the merits. (I'm grateful for the willingness of both groups to enter generously into the catechetical process.) Meanwhile St Michael's still incurs bills, and will so long as we operate as a parish.

More importantly, our Christian responsibility to give continues, even if the ecclesiastical situation is uncertain. Our Lord highlights prayer, fasting and almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount: all three are essential to a healthy Christian life. Even if St Michael's had no need, we would still need to give.

I have always been impressed with the generosity of the people of this parish, whether in the days of St James the Less or of St Michael's. People are extremely generous financially. Compared to American norms, we are off the charts. It is also the only parish I know of where pledges regularly exceed what is pledged. Most congregations receive less than what is pledged. The financial generosity is but a material reflection of a deeper generosity, which is manifested in a willingness to forgive (including pardoning me for my failings in the parish), to deal with each other charitably, to pitch in when needed, to accept with good grace the challenges presented by our wanderings in homelessness. To take just one example, the considerations extended to me and my family over the years would make a very long list. Or another: we filled 18 Christmas Shoe Boxes for children in poor parts of the world this year, nearly doubling our goal of 10. People contributed generously – some to fill the boxes, some to cover postage, some wrapping the boxes, some in assembling and delivering. The distractions of the Ordinarate did not keep people from their typical generosity.

So don't think of our gathering on the 11th as fund-raising, or our chance to badger you for more money. You alone know whether you can and should be giving more than you are – so far as I can tell (I don't know who gives what), everyone is very generous. It is rather our time to gather to discuss the family finances, so everyone is on the same page. And to discuss it not as accountants but as Christians.

On an unrelated topic, the Prayer Box ministry continues – as you probably recall, volunteers from the parish agree to pray for others' requests. The requests come from prayer boxes located in various places. Over time, we have been able to place fewer boxes than when we began. So we have started using “virtual” prayer boxes – posters which can be put up on public bulletin boards, with tear-offs with the email address of the prayer box address at the parish web site. This allow people to email their requests. Copies of the poster are available on Sundays and at the rectory: please take some and post.

Faithfully,

David Ousley