

# THE RECTOR'S CHRONICLE

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A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Life holds for us a few extraordinary things and many ordinary ones. Both matter. How we deal with the ordinary shapes how we deal with the exceptional. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (Luke 16:10) So while I mostly write about the exceptional things in our parish life each month, we should not forget the ordinary: Sung Mass on Sunday, offering the best we can to God; Coffee Hour and Sunday School; Weekday Masses; Confessions, the Wednesday healing service and Bible study; the ordinary things of parish life. They said of my seminary, "This is to a considerable extent a self-help institution." That meant the students all worked on Friday afternoon, cleaning classrooms or chapel, raking leaves, working at the library, etc. For St Michael's, it means that depend on each other to get done what needs to get done. People help set up and clean up for the Sunday Masses at West Laurel Hill. Altar Guild, Acolytes, and Greeters help with Mass. Others bring food for coffee hour, and set up and clean up from it. Others teach the children at Sunday School. All "ordinary" things, but also all vital to our Christian life. I offer here a general but sincere thanks to all who contribute so generously of their time and energy. And I offer an invitation to all of you to contribute further of yours. Let me know how you would like to help.

## Praying for Unity

Since we heard of the Roman Catholic Church's offer of an Anglican Ordinariate, I'm sure you have been praying about St Michael's response to the offer. One parishioner recently shared with me an experience, which I would like to pass along:

I have found a lovely way to spend my quiet prayer time. It makes it more quiet than it has been in the past. Each day I take a small segment, a verse or half verse, of Our Lord's prayer in John 17, as the text. Today I had the second half of verse 23, but the whole verse was an inspiration for our parish: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." When I let the verses of His prayer sink in, they are of such inexpressible beauty. This particular verse could be a vision for us, to realize that our oneness is to show the world that God sent His Son. What a calling, and what a concept, that God loves us as He loves Our Lord. It is incomprehensible that that should be, but it is. I wish that our parish could center around such a concept and be fired by it to seek as mightily as we can, and in as unified a way as we can, the Will of God, setting aside our own wills for the time being. Such an act would be on a kind of frontier, where we should always be, where we can't proceed without God.

This kind of meditation of John 17 could benefit us all. I commend it to you. Please also keep praying: for one another; for the humility and courage to do what is right, and for the right reason; for a common mind in the parish; for Bishop Campese and the leadership of the Diocese; for patience to wait upon God; for those in the congregation for whom this is particularly difficult; and for me, that I may lead and lead no one astray.

## Our Discussions

We have now had two congregational meetings beginning our discussions of the Ordinariate. I am grateful for the seriousness and charity which has characterized our meetings. It is clear, even before we get into it very far, that this is an odd place for us to be. Ideally, Christians should never be in the position of "choosing a church." There is only one Church: it is the one body, made alive by the one Spirit, with one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of us all, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 4. Christians are members of the one body, and so there is never the possibility of having to choose between churches. This is the New Testament reality. Alas, it is not the situation in which we find ourselves. Instead, the Body of Christ is all too sorely divided, and deprived of the witness of visible unity. This is painful and difficult for us. Even worse, it deprives the unbelieving world of a unified testimony to the transforming love of Christ.

We need to approach our discussions with a certain humility at the mess which we are in in the Church in our day. In considering how best to be faithful, we need always to keep in mind that things are not as they should be. To be sure, much of the mess we have inherited rather than created ourselves. Nevertheless, we bear some responsibility: even if we have not made it worse, we have not done all we could to make it better. And in any case, I'm not sure we have entirely taken it to heart, and mourned and done penance for the divisions of our Lord's Body. Such an attitude cannot but help our discussions, which need humility as well: the humility to set aside our particular desires and preferences in order to listen to one another and to the Spirit. We will also need the courage to do what is right even if it looks as though it might be costly in some way (which is likely). And we need not only to do the right thing, but (so far as we are able) to do it for the right reason.

Our decision about the Ordinariate is not merely one we each make for ourselves, but one we make together, for the parish. It is not just individual "conversion", as becoming Roman Catholic has been in the past. The Ordin-

ariate is set up for groups – parishes and dioceses mostly – to enter into communion with the Roman Church as *groups*, with their Anglican identity intact, so far as that identity is consistent with Roman Catholic faith and practice. This is why our discussions are not geared to giving each person in the congregation the information about the Ordinariate so he can make up his mind. We need to do that, of course. But we also need to listen to one another in seeking what is best for the congregation and not just for ourselves. I hope and pray that God will guide us to a common mind, and that we will be teachable.

To do this as a parish will require time and patience. Some may reach a decision earlier than others. Some will want to hear all the pros and cons as others see them before coming to a decision themselves. Some are more ready to speak their minds than to listen: others more ready to listen than to speak. Some may change their minds as they listen, and this is perfectly reasonable.

To complicate the process, our decision is not just a yea or nay on the Ordinariate, since the Anglican Church in America (of which we are a part) will be significantly changed as a result of the Ordinariate. At this point, it is not clear how it will change, though change it will. A significant portion of the ACA is likely to seek admission to the Ordinariate, though not all. Those who do not go will be faced with the question about how to be catholic as Anglicans outside the Ordinariate – and whether this is still possible in the ACA or elsewhere. That ecclesiastical question has a doctrinal counterpart: if the authoritative Magisterium of the Roman Church is not the way God intends to assure us that the Gospel we have received is the same as that which Jesus gave to the original apostles, then how is it that we are assured of the truth of the Gospel today? Anglicans have rejected the Roman Magisterium since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since the practice of the Anglican way in the United States is in disarray, is there still an adequate alternative answer to the question of how we can be sure of the truth of the Gospel? My point is not to suggest that there is (or is not) an answer: rather to frame the question before us. If we decide that God is not calling us to the Ordinariate, then we must also decide how and where we are to continue as catholic Anglicans apart from the Ordinariate. We cannot just say that we like it where we are: where we are now will not be there – at least not in the same form – afterward. Always keep in mind, though, that the ACA is committed to providing pastoral care for all those in the ACA, whether they choose to enter the Ordinariate or not. Obviously this could get complicated if a parish is not of one mind, or if the parish and its priest go different directions. But the commitment is there, and I've every reason to believe that it will be honored.

Our next parish meeting in the series is scheduled for Sunday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, during the coffee hour after the ten o'clock Mass. If you come to eight o'clock, plan to be back by 11:20 or so. We'll get started as soon as we can, after people have had a chance to get some coffee.

#### All Saints' & All Souls'

Enclosed you will find an All Souls' form and envelope. These, as in years past, are for you to supply the names of the faithful departed to be remembered at the All Souls' Day Requiem. You are also welcome to enclose a contribution. All Souls' Day is Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the Requiem will be at 6 p.m., as is usual on Tuesday. All Saints' Day is November 1<sup>st</sup>, and is one of the great feasts of the Church Year, when we celebrate all the saints in heaven in one great feast. The Mass on All Saints' will be at 6 p.m. The Masses both days are at the rectory oratory. The All Souls' envelopes may be mailed to the rectory (210 W. Allens Lane, Philadelphia, 19119) or put in the Sunday collection. They should be in my hands by October 31<sup>st</sup>. Thanks.

#### Coming Events

In addition to the congregational meeting to continue our discussion of the Ordinariate on October 24<sup>th</sup>, there is an **adult forum** on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup> during coffee hour. There is something a little different for this one: long-time parishioner and son of a priest, Samuel Henry White will share some of his reminiscences of growing up in a rectory. Since this took place some time past, when the culture was different in key respects, this is bound to be interesting. All are welcome. As usual for our adult forums, we limit the session to a half hour.

I am also beginning an **adult Inquirers' class**: a basic introduction to the Anglican Way of being Christian. The class is for any considering confirmation, and as a refresher in the basics of Christian faith and practice. It is a good chance to ask questions – especially those you never really had a good place to ask before. It will be scheduled for the convenience of those interested, so if you have interest, please speak with me as soon as possible.

Don't forget the annual **St Francis animal blessings**: Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11 at the rectory, and Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at West Laurel Hill Cemetery at 5:30 p.m. Refreshments provided, both human and animal. Also, we observe our **Feast of Title** on the Sunday within the Octave, October 3<sup>rd</sup>. We are grateful to St Michael for his protection and intercession, since we came under his patronage nearly five years ago.

The parish youth will again be participating this month in the fund-raiser **Walk for Life**, on behalf of the Alpha Crisis Pregnancy Center. As its name implies, the Center helps young women in need of help from an unplanned pregnancy. It provides the support needed to provide an alternative to abortion. The Walk is on October 16<sup>th</sup>, and the walkers will be enlisting sponsors between now and then. The walkers will have forms: feel free to sign up for any level of support, from \$1 up.

Coming in mid-November is the annual **shoe box** project, where we provide Christmas presents for children around the world through Samaritan's Purse. You can start to collect appropriate new items to fill the boxes – small toys, toothpaste and brushes, pencils, markers, stickers, pads, etc. Speak with Beth if you have any questions.

Thanks goes this month to:

- the Wednesday Bible study, for last month's *Chronicle* mailing.
- all who contributed to the annual "head tax" in support of the ACA national expenses.

Faithfully,

