



The S. Stephen

Michaelmas

2013

Vol. 13, No. 1

My dear people:

At the end of August, I marked thirteen years as Rector of S. Stephen's – a long time in today's Episcopal Church; and I have enjoyed almost every minute of it. It is a great privilege to serve here; and there is no other parish where I would rather be.

As I announced at the Annual Parish meeting this past January, however, I have not taken a sabbatical in my twenty years in the priesthood so far, and now the time has come. I will be away for the final three months of this calendar year, from October through December. I am planning to use this time to work on my dissertation for the doctorate that I have been pursuing at Boston University for several years. During part of October and November I will be in residence as a "Visiting Scholar" at Nashotah House, the Anglo-Catholic seminary in Wisconsin. I am deeply grateful to the Wardens and Vestry for agreeing to my taking this time off. And I am confident that with Fr. Sawicky and Deacon Mello on board, I am leaving the parish in good clerical hands until I return on New Year's Day, 2014.

My last official liturgical action before going away will be at the Solemn Evensong and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament the evening of Sunday 29 September for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. The Men and Boys Choir of All Saints Parish, Ashmont, Boston, will be on hand to sing for the occasion. It would be wonderful to see as many parishioners and friends of S. Stephen's in attendance as possible that evening.

While I am at Nashotah House, I will be able to attend the Academic Convocation there on October 25, where our own James Busby will be awarded an honorary Doctor of Music (D.Mus.) degree. No-one deserves greater recognition for his contributions to sacred music in the Anglican and Western Catholic traditions; and it will give me great joy to be there for the finest of colleagues and the best of friends.

Meanwhile, our capital campaign continues to move forward. Work began on the complete remodeling of the Great Hall this summer according to a plan devised by LLB Architects, who are overseeing the project, with the work being done by contractors Vasco Palmer

From the Rector

Associates. Every day for the past two months, we have been hearing the sounds of hammers and drills emanating from the second floor. The refurbished Great Hall will have new walls, a new ceiling, completely new lighting, a new stage, a new AV system, and a completely refinished floor. At the same time, the choir room has been undergoing a similar refurbishment; and I would like to take the opportunity now to thank the anonymous donors whose generosity have made this project possible as well.

As I write, the Great Hall project is nearing completion; and we are planning a celebratory luncheon for its dedication and blessing following the 10 am Mass on Sunday 15 September. All parishioners and friends of S. Stephen's are welcome – there is no charge to attend – but since the luncheon is being catered, we do ask that you reserve your place by calling or emailing Parish Secretary Cory MacLean so that we can have an accurate idea of how many to plan for.

September 15 is also the first Sunday of the new choir season, as well as the startup of Sunday School for the 2013-2014 program year. Please note the date and make every effort to come to Mass that Sunday and stay for the luncheon following.

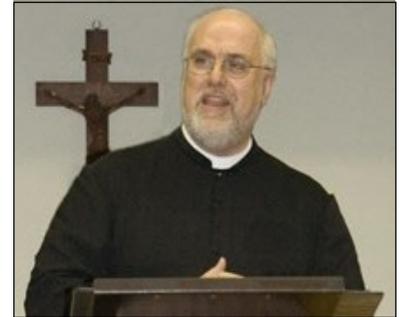
With all best wishes and prayers for the coming program year, I remain, faithfully,

Your pastor and priest,

Fr. John D. Alexander

Fr. John D. Alexander

POSTSCRIPT NEXT PAGE



POSTSCRIPT—SUMMER RECAP

Life at S. Stephen's is always eventful; but the summer of 2013 has been unusually busy in very good ways. For those who have not been around, here is an update on what has been going on.

At the beginning of June, we welcomed our new Curate and Episcopal Campus Minister, Fr. Blake Sawicky, when he arrived from Denver and moved into one of the apartments in the Guild House. He has learned a great deal of how the parish operates over the past three months, and is preparing to get the Student Group launched once again now that the university is back in session. Do take the opportunity to introduce yourself and begin getting to know him if you have not already done so.

On Saturday, June 15, we were honored to welcome Bishop Nicholas Knisely to S. Stephen's for the Ordination of Mary Ann Mello to the Permanent Diaconate. It was a glorious occasion; and I have since heard from many of the visitors from around the diocese and beyond how awed they were with S. Stephen's liturgy and music. Mary Ann was assigned to S. Stephen's as her training parish for the two years prior to her ordination; and we were delighted when Bishop Knisely announced later in the summer that S. Stephen's will be her first diaconal assignment as well, so she will remain with us for the time being.

At the same time, Bishop Knisely announced that Deacon Leroy (Buck) Close would be assigned to St. John's, Newport, to assist their incoming Vicar, Fr. Nathan Humphrey. Our sister Anglo-Catholic parish in the diocese, St. John's has been through some difficult times, culminating in their being reduced to mission status several months ago. We are sad to see Deacon Close leave S. Stephen's after only one year; yet his time here has given him a solid foundation in Anglo-Catholic liturgical practice that he will be able to put to good use in his new assignment.

Members of the S. Stephen's Schola Cantorum sang at Fr. Humphrey's first Mass at St. John's on the Feast of the Assumption on August 15. Three of our servers – Bill Dilworth, Andrew Alexander, and Louis Verdelotti – assisted in the Altar Party; and the S. Stephen's clergy participated in minor liturgical roles as well. A good number of our parishioners were in the congregation. It was a wonderful launch for the new clergy team at St. Johns, and a promising instance of practical cooperation between our two parishes. We hope that we shall have similar opportunities for activities together in the months and years to come. –jda+

A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

In union, dear Lord, with the faithful at every altar of thy Church where Thy blessed Body and Blood are being offered to the Father, I desire to offer Thee praise and thanksgiving. I believe that Thou art truly present in the Holy Sacrament. And since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, I beseech Thee to come spiritually into my heart. I unite myself unto Thee, and embrace Thee with all the affections of my soul. Let me never be separated from Thee. Let me live and die in Thy love. Amen.

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ANGELS IN THE LITURGY: A VERY BRIEF SURVEY

By Bill Dillworth

Unlike some branches of the Catholic Church, Anglicanism has not officially defined the nature and ministry of angels in its doctrinal formulae. You find no explicit reference to them in the Nicene or the Apostles' Creeds, the Articles of Religion, the Decree of the Council of Chalcedon or the Athanasian Creed. Rather, the Church confidently asserts that they exist, and hasn't seen a need to make formal pronouncements about them — they're just there.

There is an ancient maxim that states, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*" —

which means that our worship expresses our beliefs. This concept is very important in Anglicanism, so much so that in the absence of formal doctrinal statements Anglicans have often looked at our liturgical texts for authoritative statements of belief. As it turns

out, the Book of Common Prayer has a lot to say about angels. Whether or not theologians ever seriously pondered the number of angels that could dance on the head of a pin, a large number seem to dance between the covers of the Prayer Book.

They are in the canticles of Morning Prayer - blessing God in the *Benedicite* and the *Benedictus es*, and crying aloud to him in the *Te Deum*. Every Eucharistic Prayer, both in Rite One and Rite Two, introduces the *Sanctus* with words that make it clear that we are joining our prayers and praises with the ceaseless praises of the angels before God's throne in heaven — the earthly, human liturgy combines with the angelic one during Mass. And after our praise has run its course, the angels continue to sing God's glory.

Praising God isn't the only thing that we find the angels doing in the liturgy. The Collect for the Annunciation, which is also used at the end of the daily Angelus prayer, reminds us that it was an angel who brought the Blessed Virgin Mary the news that God had chosen her to be the instrument of the Incarnation. One of the Collects for Mission in Evening Prayer asks Our Lord to give his angels charge over those

who sleep, and in a collect prayed at Compline we ask that God will send his angels to dwell with us to preserve us in peace. And when we pray for someone at the Vigil before their funeral, we ask God that angels will surround the newly departed as he is welcomed by the saints into the eternal realms.

As presented in the liturgy, then, angels have a double ministry. They continually glorify God, and they accomplish tasks that God sets for them, including protecting human beings. Above all, they have special charge over those who are unable to help themselves, such as the sleeping or the dead. And, of course, we can find them doing all these things in the scriptural readings and Psalms appointed for use in the liturgy.

The Collect for the feast of St. Michael and All Angels (a Major Feast observed on September 29) combines both of these themes — angelic praise of God and angelic help and defense of humans:

O everlasting God, who has ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and men in a wonderful order: Mercifully grant that, as thy holy angels always serve and worship thee in heaven, so by thy appointment they may help and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

We will celebrate this feast on Sunday, September 29, at 5:30. Our observance will include Solemn Evensong, Procession, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The Choir of Men and Boys from All Saints Ashmont, Boston, under the direction of Andrew Sheranian, organist and master of the choristers, will sing music of Philip Radcliffe, Francis Jackson, and Jacob Handl. Please join us for this celebration, and for the reception that will follow.



FR. SAWICKY'S LETTER



Recently a number of people have asked me about the way we worship at S. Stephen's, and what might be a good book or two to introduce the meaning of what we do. It's a great question, which I can well understand: the Anglican tradition is not native to my upbringing, and when I discovered it later in life, I had the exact same kinds of questions. Why are we so careful about "doing the dishes" after mass? What are vestments about? When should I sit, kneel, stand? I could easily see that there was something significant about all these actions: to me it seemed they were part and parcel of "the beauty of holiness" which I saw so reverently and affectionately acted out before the altar. And I was curious what they all meant. I recognize the same curiosity at work in those who have asked me this question in recent months in Providence, as well as during my time in Denver.

The difficulty -- which I have experienced now both as someone asking the question and as someone being asked -- is that there is no straightforward answer.

The same action completed at the same time can mean very different things to different people, and it can even mean different things to the same person on different days. For example, crossing myself can be a way to recall the Lord's passion and death; but it can also be a cry for help, or even a prayer of the body when words are not forthcoming from the mind. The liturgy is full of such prayerful, symbolic acts -- some corporate, some private -- which together help give shape to our offering of worship on any given day.

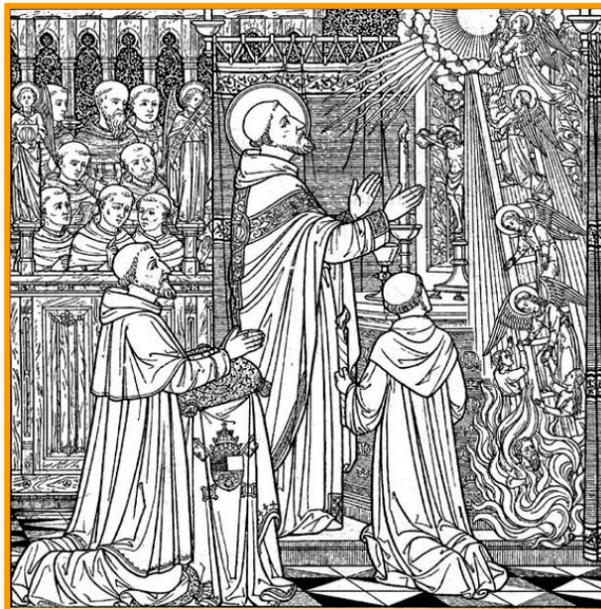
How does one enter into this "cloud of meaning," then, especially when one is not familiar with its contours? I think the first step is to trust your initial perception that there is in fact something deeply meaningful and sacred going on in the liturgy. Then, you might try watching others and mimicking what they do -- not in order to "get it right," but rather to enter more deeply into the holy mysteries. Even if you do not completely understand what you are doing, you will be doing it anyway, and this kind of exercise is invaluable. The mind sometimes takes a while

to catch up with the heart, the body, and the soul. We know this to be the case in romance, in science, and in art, where we often perceive something but don't grasp its whole meaning immediately, and it is true in religion as well. By trusting your perception, mimicking the way you see others engage in the action, and letting affection grow in your heart for the work of God which you are about, the body is trained and the eyes of the soul are opened. This paves the way for the mind to collect them all together and be lifted in prayer to the throne of grace.

Whether or not you can consciously follow what is going on in church at any given point of the liturgy, one happy truth remains: while we offer

"ourselves, our souls and bodies" to God, God also offers himself to us. Both offerings find their fullness in the person of Christ, who is really present in the Sacrament, and whose mystical body we are. This is the central mystery of the liturgy, in which heaven and earth meet and all things taste the unity our Triune God. Understanding is not easy! But it grows by grace, with time. And while it grows, by fits and starts, we are nourished by the One who draws us on.

In the final assessment, I think the best answer to the question, "What does it mean?" is the most practical one: keep coming to church, keep saying your prayers (in word as well as action), keep your heart and mind open to the movement of God and respond with dedication and love. In this way, you will find yourself saying with the patriarch Jacob (from Genesis 28, after dreaming of angels at Bethel): *"Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it! . . . This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."*



WHY NO GLUTEN-FREE HOSTS AT S. STEPHEN'S?

By the Rev. John D. Alexander

In the past year or two, the S. Stephen's clergy have received one or two inquiries about "gluten free" hosts – which some parishes are apparently offering in an attempt to accommodate individuals who cannot ingest hosts made from wheat flour on account of celiac disease or wheat allergies. More recently, those who adhere to the traditional practice of using Eucharistic bread made only from wheat have come under fire as being rigid and inhospitable. For example, I came across the following comment on Facebook. I don't know the individual concerned – he is a Friend-of-a-Friend commenting on a posting made by a Friend-in-Common – but his comment exemplifies some all-too-typical attitudes in the Church today:

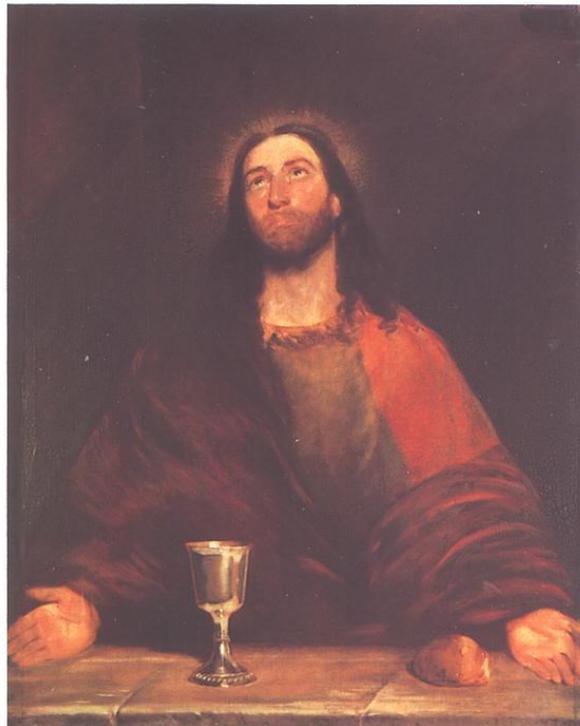
I recall a case in the RC church in which someone who could not have gluten asked for rice-based communion wafers and was turned down. This incensed me and I asked our rector who said, "That's right. They have to be wheat."

I understand the value of following Scriptural tradition. I also know that Jesus smiles down at all us funny little people taking our rigid little rules so seriously, when the single most important thing, the thing we tend to so often forget, is to act out of LOVE in all things. Jesus doesn't care what the wafers are made of. He is far more concerned with how we treat even the least of these, because however we do so, with love, we do so unto Him.¹

The individual who wrote these words is obviously sincere, well-meaning, and motivated by compassion for the spiritual needs of those with wheat intolerance. But he becomes smugly patronizing – "all us funny little people taking our rigid little rules so seriously" – and his subsequent words seem calculated to put those of us who hold to the Church's traditional practice on the defensive by accusing us of acting against love. No one wants to be uncompassionate or unloving.

¹Comment by Jonnie Comet on August 10, 2013, on <https://www.facebook.com/matthew.tucker.35>, accessed on August 25, 2013.

The writer does seem a bit presumptuous in his overconfidence that he knows what Jesus does and does not care about. And his concept of what love requires is, in the end, cloyingly sentimental. It is precisely the imperative of obedience to Christ's commandments that leads the Church Catholic to specify the use of wheat bread and fermented grape wine as the material elements used in the Holy Eucharist. For any priest, it would be a great offense against love to give members of the flock a sacrament of doubtful validity. My aim here is to explain why using gluten-free hosts in the Eucharist risks doing exactly that.



The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer, 1979*, and its *Constitution and Canons* nowhere specify the composition of the Eucharistic elements. They don't specify many other things, either, like the vestments to be worn by the ministers in worship, or the liturgical colors for the various seasons of the Church Year. In such cases, where the official formularies of our own branch of the Church are silent, a good way to start seeking guidance is to consult

the authoritative teachings and practices of the other branches of the wider Universal Church.

The official position of the Roman Catholic Church on this question is clear and unambiguous. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states: "The bread for celebrating the Eucharist must be made only from wheat ..." (Chapter VI, No. 320). And Canon 924 of the *Code of Canon Law* specifies: "The bread must be only wheat ..."

For many centuries, the Eastern and Western Churches have engaged in a running dispute about whether the Eucharistic bread should be leavened or unleavened. To my knowledge, though, neither side has accused the other's practice of rendering the Sacrament invalid. Yet, while insisting that the bread must

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be leavened, the Eastern Orthodox Churches agree with the West that it must be made from wheat.

The ancient recipes for baking the *prosphora* – the “offerings” – strictly specify the use of wheat flour, water, yeast, and salt.

Finally, while the formularies of the Episcopal Church are silent on the question, those of the Church of England are not. The *Canons of the Church of England* state: “The bread, whether leavened or unleavened, shall be of the best and purest wheat flour that conveniently may be gotten ...” (Canon B 17.3). The wording of this canon echoes a rubric that appeared in the English Prayer Books of 1552, 1559, and 1662. The rubric in the 1662 Prayer Book, which remains in force in the Church of England today, requires the Eucharistic bread to be “the best and purest Wheat Bread that may conveniently be gotten.” So, the requirement that the Eucharistic bread be made from wheat is not only a Roman Catholic concern but is integral to the Anglican Tradition as well.

We don't use gluten-free hosts for the same reason we don't use grape juice. In neither case do we have sufficient assurance that the substance in question is the element ordained by Christ.

An item in the “Historic Documents” section of the Episcopal Church’s 1979 Prayer Book indicates the question’s importance. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral was approved by the

American House of Bishops meeting in Chicago in 1886, and subsequently by the Bishops of the Anglican Communion meeting at Lambeth in 1888. This four-point statement attempted to specify the key markers of Anglican identity that would have to be upheld in any ecumenical scheme for unity with other churches: (1) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; (2) the Apostles and Nicene Creeds; (3) the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist; and (4) the Historic Episcopate [or Apostolic Succession of Bishops].

The wording of the third point is significant in that it specifies that Baptism and the Eucharist be “ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s Words of Institution, and of *the elements ordained by Him*” [BCP 1979, pp. 877-878, italics added]. The “element” ordained by Christ in Baptism is, of course, water; and those in the Holy Eucharist are bread and wine.

It seems likely that the bishops at Chicago and Lambeth wanted to rule out the use of grape juice – as practiced by a number of temperance-minded Protestant denominations at that time and since – because only fermented grape wine could truly be considered “wine” and hence the element ordained by the Lord. But in our present context, the same principle applies to the Eucharistic bread. We don’t use gluten-free hosts for the same reason that we don’t use grape juice. In neither case do we have sufficient assurance that the substance in question is truly “bread” or “wine,” the element ordained by Christ.

Why does it matter? If we take the view of some Protestant denominations that the bread and wine are humanly devised symbols that bear no *intrinsic* relation to the spiritual realities they signify, then perhaps it does not matter. In that case, one symbol is as good as another so long as it produces the subjective experience that the communicant associates with receiving Holy Communion. The material symbols then become infinitely malleable according to the different cultures and pastoral contexts in which the Eucharist is celebrated. One of my seminary classmates once argued in a classroom discussion that pizza and coke should be allowed as the elements in Eucharists celebrated with youth groups because that would make them more “relevant” to young people. Needless to say, he was not an Anglo-Catholic.

A less extreme position might be that while the Eucharistic elements must be bread and wine, it doesn’t matter whether they’re *really* bread and wine, or just sufficiently similar substances that can be *called* bread and wine. Especially since a communion wafer doesn’t look much like ordinary bread anyway, it could be argued that it’s no problem making one from another substance such as rice paste, and then *calling* it bread, so long as it produces the same experiential effect on the devout believer who receives it in faith. But calling something bread that is not bread does not make it bread, except in the semiotic world of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, who declares: “When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

The Catholic tradition understands the matter differently. The bread and wine are not humanly-devised symbols, but, as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral affirms, the elements ordained by Christ himself. They are God-given, of divine institution. At the Last Supper, Christ commands his Apostles, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Not: “Do something more or less like this,” but “DO THIS.” The Greek phrase

translated “in remembrance of me” – *eis tēn emēn anamnesin* [Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24, 25] – actually means something more like “to call me into your midst,” or “to make me present among you.” And the grace of the Sacrament far transcends what we subjectively experience when we receive it. In effect, then, our Lord is making a covenant with us: if we do our part, he will do his. If we obey his command to offer and bless the elements of bread and wine as he did at the Last Supper, then he will give them back to us as the spiritual food and drink of his Body and Blood.

But to be sure that what we are receiving is truly his Body and Blood, we first need to be sure that what we have offered is truly bread and wine. For this reason, the Tradition of the Universal Church has developed certain minimal safeguards: if the bread is made from wheat flour, whether leavened or unleavened, then we have sufficient assurance that it’s really bread; if the wine is fermented fruit of the vine, then we have sufficient assurance that it’s really wine – and hence valid matter for the Eucharist.

At this point, an exasperated reader might object: “But God is not limited in the means he can use to communicate his grace to us!” That objection is valid. God can indeed communicate his grace in whatever way he chooses. As the Catechism in the 1979 Prayer Book puts it, “Q. Is God’s activity limited to these rites? A. God does not limit himself to these rites. They are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us” [BCP 1979, p. 861]. There is also a saying, however, that while God is not bound by his ordinances, the Church is. That is, while God is perfectly free to impart his grace to any individual by any means he chooses, the Church is nonetheless called to live in obedience to Christ’s commandments and make available to the faithful those sacramental means of grace that Christ has appointed.

So it won’t do to argue that we can count on Christ to make rice wafers into bread just as he made water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana, or as he makes bread and wine into his Body and Blood. We do well to remember that one of the devil’s temptations in the wilderness was, “*If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread*” [Matthew 4:3]. It was clearly in our Lord’s power to make stones into bread, and the temptation appealed to the entirely praisewor-

thy motive of relieving hunger. But it was still a temptation to disobedience. As Jesus said in response to a subsequent temptation: “*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test*” [Matthew 4:7].

Christ has commanded his Church to celebrate the Eucharist using bread and wine. He has not authorized us to substitute other elements for the ones he has appointed. The validity of the Sacraments – the absolute assurance that they convey the inward and spiritual graces signified by their outward and visible signs – depends on performing them faithfully in the manner in which the Church believes them to have been ordained by the Lord. As a priest, then, I simply do not have the authority to celebrate the Eucharist with gluten-free hosts. I cannot in good conscience put a host into a communicant’s hands and proclaim, “The Body of

Christ, the Bread of Heaven,” when I lack sufficient assurance that it is either true Bread or the true Body of Christ. To do so would be both a blasphemy and a violation of love.

What comfort, then, can we offer someone with a wheat intolerance who cannot receive the host? Such persons deserve our compassion and whatever consideration we can offer without compromising the integrity of our received teachings and

practices. One church supply firm apparently offers “low-gluten” wafers – in which the gluten content is .01 percent – which the Roman Catholic Church has approved as valid Eucharistic bread. But for some celiac disease sufferers, even .01 percent may be too much. The most straightforward solution is to receive in one kind – in this case the wine only. For years, alcoholics for whom even the tiniest sip of wine or even intinction would be dangerous have received only the host and not the chalice. Conversely, for a compelling reason, it is equally legitimate to receive only the chalice and not the host. Christ is fully present – Body, Blood, soul, and divinity – under both kinds, separately. Perhaps it is providential that he gave us the Sacrament in two kinds, bread and wine, so that those who could not receive one, for whatever reason, could at least receive the other and thereby benefit just as fully as if they were receiving both.

At the risk of pursuing a *reductio ad absurdum*, we may well ask: What about the poor unfortunate with a combination of health conditions that prevents receiving either the bread or the wine? In that rare instance,

Because God accepted the limitations of becoming incarnate in a particular time, place, and culture, the Church likewise accepts corresponding limitations in her sacramental practice.

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the recourse would be to make a “spiritual communion.” More Episcopalians should know about and avail themselves of this venerable practice. At times when one is for a compelling reason unable to be present at Mass, or when one is at a Mass where one cannot receive Communion, one simply asks Jesus to come into one’s heart spiritually and impart all the graces one would receive from the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Beyond that, I believe that it is in the power of the bishop to dispense such a person from the canonical requirement of receiving Holy Communion three times a year to maintain active communicant status in the Church. This approach is at least honest about the realities of the situation, and does not attempt to be pastoral or hospitable by pretending that something is a valid Sacrament that is at best a Sacrament of doubtful validity. Such an attempt to be kind is much crueler than simply telling the truth.

If the Church’s insistence on certain material specifications for the sacramental elements seems like arbitrary hair-splitting, the real reason may involve what is known as “the scandal of particularity.” One of the most difficult claims of Christianity for many people to accept is that God chose to reveal himself in a special way to one people in particular, the Jews, and to become Incarnate in one person in particular, Jesus

Christ. Moreover, in becoming incarnate, God subjected himself to the definite limitations of time, space, and material existence. This characteristic of God’s self-revelation introduces the crucial principle of making what might be called *limiting distinctions*, along the lines of “this-and-not-that,” in the Church’s teaching and practice.

At the end of the poem *Christmas*, John Betje-man affirms that amidst all the glitz surrounding the celebration of the holiday, nothing can compare with the single truth “That God was man in Palestine / and lives today in Bread and Wine.” Because God accepted the limitations of becoming incarnate in a particular time, place, and culture, the Church likewise accepts corresponding limitations in her sacramental practice. If Jesus had lived in a different place and time, he might have appointed plantains and coconut milk, or rice cakes and *sake*, as the material elements by which he would henceforth become sacramentally present in the life of his Church – and we would then be bound by *those* ordinances. But he did not. He became incarnate in first-century Palestine, with the result that he “lives today in Bread and Wine.” This and not that: the scandal of particularity. And yet the very particularity of the Incarnation communicates God’s life to humankind and makes our salvation possible.

FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN

While writing this article, I was reminded of Hillary Clinton’s famous phase, “It takes a village.” In our renovation of the Great Hall, it has taken a congregation.

Over the past summer we have all sat through coffee hour with no lights and surrounded by dust. Now I know many of you may miss the big square fluorescents that have lighted up our lives as we consumed caffeine and sugar every Sunday morning over the last couple of decades. But we all must admit that the beautiful chandeliers, ceiling fans and the three tone walls will be a refreshing change to the

faded mint green walls. The window treatments will provide a warm finishing touch.

By pledging to our Capital Campaign over the next 3 years we embarked on a journey that testifies to our commitment to the future. The redecorating of the Great Hall represents the first stage of that process.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the refreshed choir room. (See our Choir Master’s “Quodlibet” and Cory MacLean’s “The Choir Room” elsewhere in this issue.) The walls have a new

coat of paint, refinished wood floors and new and improved lighting. This was all made possible by the generosity of an anonymous parishioner. On behalf of everyone, thank you!

In conclusion, I would like to thank one and all. Your gifts are making our future possible by providing more usable spaces for the ministry of our parish so that we can host even more varieties of events.

Gratefully,
Sue Brazil

FROM THE SACRISTY: A LADDER TO HEAVEN

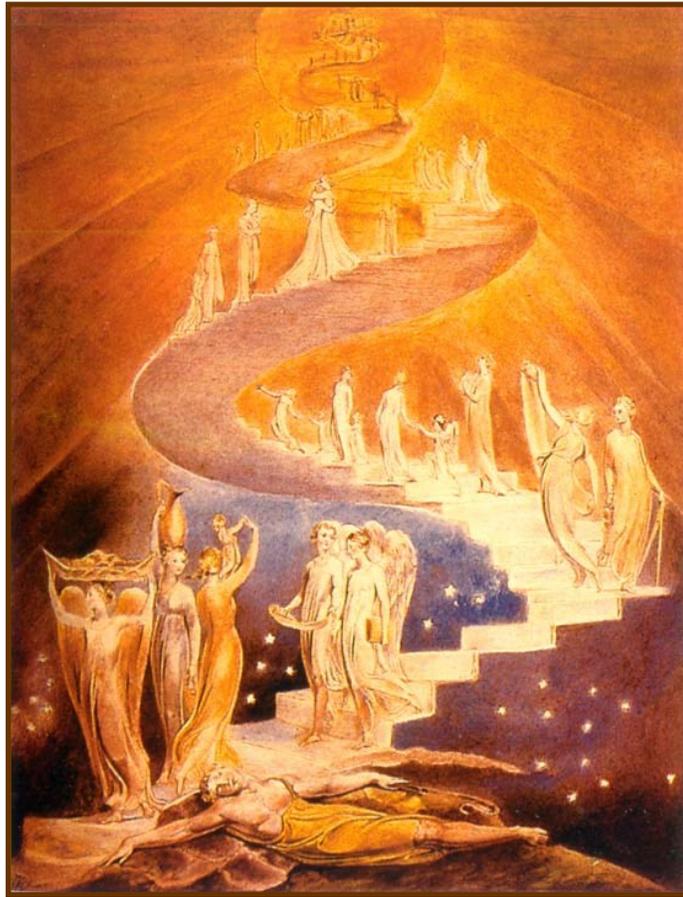
By Phoebe Pettingell

September ends with the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, which always reminds me of two related passages from Scripture: Jacob's dream at Bethel [Genesis 28:10-17] and Jesus' promise to Nathaniel [John 1:51]. Jacob dreams of "a ladder set up on the earth" whose top reaches to heaven, "and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." Above it stands God, who promises the fugitive dreamer the land on which he lies; with the additional prophesy that Jacob's descendants will be as numerous as "the dust of the earth." Jacob wakes, exclaiming, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." In another reference to Jacob's Ladder, when the guileless Nathaniel professes faith in Jesus, after having just met him, Christ replies, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

We all need to discover this heavenly ladder. One of the time-honored ways to place ourselves on its rungs and start climbing is to recite the psalms every day. The word *psalm* is derived from the Greek, and originally seems to have meant a song sung to the accompaniment of a lyre or harp. These 150 hymns found in the Old Testament play a central role in Judaism, where they appear among the *Ketuvim* or "poetic" books [also including Proverbs and Job] that follow the books of the major and minor Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. Tradition states that originally psalms were sung in front of the Ark of the Tabernacle, then—in King Solomon's

time—the Temple steps, and were chanted by the Levites. They were a vehicle for worship, as well as a retelling of the history of Children of Israel exhorting them to follow God. Psalms remain a major part of

Synagogue liturgy. Tradition attributes the authorship of many of them to King David—the "sweet singer of Israel. In medieval pictures of heaven, David is usually portrayed with a harp. The later notion that angels too play harps and other musical instruments may well have sprung from these depictions, either through confusing saints with angelic beings or else because the continual adoration of God through the voices of angels and saints is believed to be harmonic. The Koran likewise teaches that God revealed the music of heaven to David, just as the Torah was revealed to Moses and the Koran to Muhammad. Among the three "Peoples of the Book" belief per-



sists that reciting psalms or listening to them sung provides a vital channel to the voice of God.

Morning and Evening Prayer at S. Stephen's follows a very ancient Christian custom of working through the entire psalter in a matter of weeks. Initially, monastic communities, and perhaps some churches as well, recited all 150 psalms in the course of a day. Later the psalms were arranged to be gone through in either one or two weeks. The Book of Common Prayer divides the Psalter into a 30-day

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cycle for use at Morning and Evening Prayer, and this is what we use in our chapel. We follow the monastic custom of reciting responsively [alternating between the officiant and the congregation], with a pause at the asterisk. This makes for a more contemplative and rhythmic way of reading, so that we keep “in harmony” with one another. As Father Sawicky observed in a recent homily, this togetherness becomes a foretaste of the heavenly unity we hope to enjoy with the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

Praying the psalms enlarges our spiritual and emotional vocabulary. Most of us would have to admit that when we try to frame our own prayers to God into words, we sometimes feel inarticulate and suspect that

Each month, as we begin the Psalter yet again, it helps transform us a little more into the people God created us to be.

we are not really expressing what our deepest selves want to say. The Psalter covers the full range of address to the Divine: petitions: “*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord; for ever?*” [#13] or “*Preserve me, O God; for in thee have I put my trust.*” [#16];

thanksgiving: “*I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will speak of all thy marvelous works.*” [#9]; penitence: “*Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offenses. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.*” [#51]; praise: “*O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.*” [#95]; humility: “*Lord, I am not high-minded; I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother.*” [#131]; acknowledgement of God’s omnipotence: “*O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed; and art acquainted with all my ways.*” [#138]; self-knowledge: “*Who can tell how of the offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults.*” [#19]; Hope: “*I look to the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust.*” [#130]; adoration of God’s grandeur: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.*” [#19]. The list could be almost infinitely extended. If you feel betrayed by people you trusted, there are

psalms that express the depth of your pain. Anger and a desire for vengeance can be cathartically articulated so that it does not fester.

Psalms express more than individual conversations with God. Many rehearse the liberation of his people from bondage in Egypt and Babylon, the defeat of enemies, divine anger at apostasy and merciful forgiveness when sinners turn again and repent. Some express ritual rejoicing in God’s house of worship, even enumerating the proper kind of procession and the musical instruments to be used. If you work your way in worship through the entire psalter each month, you will come to know God better and better, quite possibly learning about aspects of yourself you previously feared to acknowledge or express. Father R. M. Benson, founder of The Society of St. John the Evangelist [SSJE], called a section of the Psalter “War Songs of the Prince of Peace,” and suggested that we read these as battle hymns against the evil lurking in the world and sin in our own natures. Dietrich Bonhoeffer imagined the psalms as “The Prayer Book of Jesus Christ,” and suggested we think of our Lord reciting them. Christian liturgy interprets many psalms as prophetic of Christ’s own Passion—this is why we use #22, “My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me?” during Holy Week. Christ repeated its opening words on the cross. St. Paul quotes psalms 14 and 53 as the basis for his understanding of Original Sin.

Each month, as we begin the Psalter yet again, it helps transform us a little more into the people God created us to be. The psalms and daily office readings in the chapel encourage me to be more faithful in reading them on my own so I won’t miss the ones we skip by not having Morning or Evening Prayer that day. Suddenly, some phrase I never thought much about before will strike me; then God’s voice breaks through. If my conscious mind wanders, the psalms continue to carry my prayers along and refocus my attention. But when their rhythms and words capture me fully, then I glimpse that ladder reaching up to heaven. It, too, is our Lord’s own body and still the angels descend into our worship to bring us His Grace.



**SOLEMN EVENSONG,
PROCESSION,
& BENEDICTION**

**The Feast of Saint
Michael and All Angels**

**SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER
5:30 PM**



**The Choir of Men and Boys
All Saints, Ashmont, Boston
Andrew Sheranian
Organist and Master of the
Choristers**

**Music of Radcliffe,
Jackson & Handl**

THE TREASURER'S CORNER

By Ransom Widmer

We are celebrating!

The completion of the Great Hall's remodeling is a landmark for our parish and fulfills the first phase of our Capital Campaign. We will all have our first experience of its fresh appearance at the dedication luncheon following 10 am Mass on September 15th.

The new Great Hall features improved lighting, including track lights for exhibitions and a state-of-the-art audio-visual system to enhance projection of computer presentations and films, as well as a stage which can be extended and configured on two levels. In addition to providing a space for the parish to meet and socialize in a handsome, comfortable setting, the refurbished room will also enable S. Stephen's to offer our facilities to community groups for activities such as lectures, exhibits and recitals.

This is an appropriate time to reflect upon the purpose of the remodeling. For some time now, pledged contributions have been significantly lower than operational costs of this parish. For a number of years, we responded to this by attempting cost-reduction. However, this limited the program we were able to offer. Furthermore, without compromising our basic identity, we could not cut back on our mass schedule or music program. Ultimately, the Vestry decided that a better way to increase financial security would be a larger contributing membership. With this strategy in mind, we retained consultant Peter Saros to advise us on parish planning and growth.

Two years ago, Peter presided at a series of monthly Parish dinners. He led the congregation through a process of discerning which attributes of S. Stephen's might attract new members. After much discussion and reflection, it seemed that we might get more people into the building by offering our building as a space for artistic and cultural events to the greater Providence community, hoping this would help to begin attracting new members.

But how to implement this? A first step has been to remodel our Great Hall to attract targeted groups to utilize our facilities, become familiar with S. Stephen's, so that of the many who come through our doors hopefully a few will be drawn to find out more about us and become full participants in our parish life. It is important to remember that our ultimate goal is not rental income, but rather growth of membership. To merely "rent out" the Great Hall would be to lose this space in performing our Christian mission.

Thus, we are not merely celebrating the completion of one phase of the Capital Campaign, but the start of another: seeking new members through their use of the Great Hall. It is also the beginning of the second year of the Capital Campaign. More about this in the next *Treasurer's Corner* ...

FROM STEPHEN D'EVELYN

Stephen was a committed member of S. Stephen's from his baptism at the Easter Vigil in 2005, until his move to England, described in his article below. He attended the daily masses, as well as Sunday worship, and once gave a talk to the congregation about his scholarly work on the mystical twelfth century nun, Hildegard of Bingen. Many changes awaited Stephen in Bristol. He married and now has three children. He also felt an ever-growing call to a priestly vocation, which he describes below. Over the years, our parish has nurtured many vocations to the priesthood, and we thank God for Stephen's addition to that number, and keep him in our prayers as he continues to test his call in seminary.



On the Feast of the Assumption in 2007, I moved from Providence to take up a job at the University of Bristol in England. To make a long story short, in mid-September I shall begin training for the holy ministry here in Bristol, and that life-changing calling started at S. Stephen's.

Throughout the mid-2000s I thought I was busy building an academic career at Brown as a post-doctoral research fellow. (I had been an undergraduate at Brown in the early '90s but am embarrassed to say I never set foot in S. Stephen's despite its proximity to the Refectory where I worked.) From Brown I went to Cambridge to do a Ph.D. and while in England the seeds of conversion were sewn, but they only started to sprout when I returned to Providence and found S. Stephen's. Looking back, my first months at

S. Stephen's were also the first months of my calling to the priesthood. But I had to start at the beginning, so I was baptized as an adult at the Easter Vigil Mass in 2005 and the parish played a crucial role in my conversion leading to that life-changing moment of baptism.

I can still remember the dazzling play of flickering candles filling the dark church on Holy Saturday 2005. I was twenty-nine years old. The life and worship of the parish brought out in me deep perceptions and drew new understandings into the light. I came to experience word and sacrament as divine transformation which, in turn, transforms humanity. I started to see the body in new and profound ways—this had deep personal significance for me since I have a visual impairment. I continue to be amazed at the ways people with disabilities, at the margins of so many aspects of society, may open up important aspects of reflection on God. The importance and power of beauty from our encounters with the divine also came into focus. And I started to find how a congregation's life together is infused with grace. Individuals are not just separate units, but become collective, comprising a community made up of a spectrum of individuality yet drawn together as we are drawn towards God. So I owe a great debt of gratitude to my church family at S. Stephen's and remember you all with great love.

The veneration of the Virgin is one important gift I received while part of S. Stephen's and I offer this little poem which came to me after the Feast of the Assumption this year as part of the thanks I have long wanted to send to my dear church family at S. Stephen's.

*Those single notes tracing space still beyond
a page or screen lead out of mind,
the timbre a shimmer yet full of heart
the refrain a leap of joy beyond thought:
what is there? An embrace that pushes back
affirming, confirming, the lightness and ache
of summer night and winter day in these shoes
we are in this place singing your royal blues.*



Quodlibet

by James Busby

quodlibet (kwäd'lə bet') *n* [ME fr. ML quodlibetum, fr. L quodlibet, fr. *qui* who, what + *libet* it pleases, fr. *libere* to please] 1. a piece of music combining several different melodies, usually popular tunes, in counterpoint and often a light-hearted, humorous manner - *Merriam Webster*



The Old Farmer tells us the first day of fall is to be 22nd September but for me Labor Day weekend signals the start of all activity for the new season, and I for one am ready for it! The music prospectus is proof-read to a fare-thee-well and my long suffering scribe has learned how to reproduce composer Uģis Prauliņš's name with the correct diacriticals and convinced the printer to reproduce likewise. It should be in the mail by now and certainly on the website. I'm happy for any chance at creativity and new things and the time spent researching, reading the lectionary, and rummaging in general is a gift to me: there's so much to learn.

Two events I'd like to bring to your attention and would wish you'd tell friends to support them—even though they do lengthen the time spent in the neighborhood on the Sabbath: (RISD Museum is so close by and is a great way to spend some of the time between Mass and an afternoon event).

First: Solemn Evensong and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will be sung 29 September at 5:30 pm by the Choir of Men and Boys of Parish of All Saint's, Ashmont, Boston. Andrew Sheranian, Organist and Master of the Choristers, does such a splendid and skilled job keeping this tradition alive and well. This

will be their second visit and I'm so pleased we were able to schedule it again this year. Choral works by Philip Radcliffe, Francis Jackson, and Jacob Handl will be featured, and a reception will follow in Great Hall.

On 20 October at 5:30 pm I will again play a recital. In memory of those who have contributed to the musical life of

our church, this one will include works of J. S. Bach and a site-specific musical travelogue: the itinerary to include the Rhine, Bé-horleguy, Sar-



Hyunjung Choi, harpist

asota and Salamanca by composers Vierne, Bonnal and Bovet. I'll be joined by harpist Hyunjung Choi - she and I will play *Danses Sacrée et Profane* of Debussy, among other things. Hyunjung is a faculty member of Brown and recently appointed principal harpist of Rhode Island Philharmonic, a post awarded, I understand, after exhaustive auditions by the orchestra.

A few newsy bits from within Schola...

Tenor **Joshua May** will be joining the faculty at the University of Michigan for the fall, where he will be teaching voice. In addition he will be giving a faculty voice recital there and will return to us at Christmas. This, a logical next step after all his fine work on dissertation and concerts these past years...

Tenor **Derek Labrie**, who has been a valued member of Schola since undergrad school in 2001, will be entering Rhode Island College this fall for another degree - this time in secondary education concentrating in Mathematics...

I trust Alto **Stanley Chang**, Distinguished Professor of Math at Wellesley, will give Derek all the help



The Choir of Men and Boys, All Saints Ashmont, Boston, Under the direction of Andrew Sheranian

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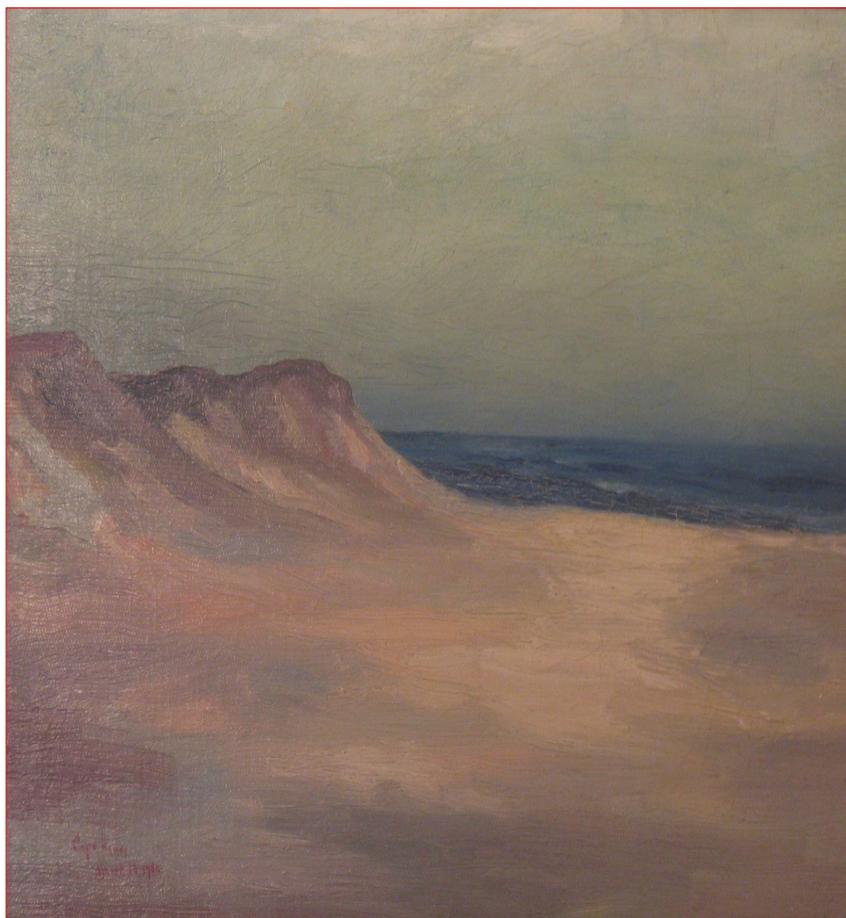
he needs. Stanley, by the way, writes of a visit to Pacific Northwest where he enjoyed Trees of Mystery and Crater Lake...

Alto, **Lynne deBenedette** spent two months in St. Petersburg, Russia coordinating 10 “delightful students” (sic) of Russian on Brown's summer-abroad program there, and observed “the Anglican services in the city are held at the Swedish church, which, like most church buildings in 20th century Russia, was taken over by the state during Soviet times – so the building spent almost 60 years as a youth sports center before returning to church control in 1993.” I feel certain those on our Great Hall and Music Room project could offer solid advice on refurbishment...

Speaking of the music room, work is drawing to a close and Cory MacLean and I will begin the task

of re-organizing shelves and library and putting it all back together within hours of this writing. With the new lighting, I can't wait to have a post-sunset rehearsal and actually be able to *see* - no excuses for any of us, Choir! Susan Brazil and my anonymous donors have worked so hard on this and I offer my heartfelt gratitude as publicly as possible. Won't you drop in and take a look when in the Parish House?

As Quodlibet offers, by definition above, things that please, and by my nature is a bit of a ramble anyway, in closing I reproduce a painting by Winchester Massachusetts tonalist painter Hermann Dudley Murphy (1867-1945) entitled *Cape, 1908* for your pleasure. Seashore or stirring redwoods I trust you've had a splendid, refreshing summer and, as I, are eager for what's next. — JCB



Cape, 1908
Hermann Dudley Murphy (1867 - 1945)

THE CHOIR ROOM

By Cory MacLean

You might not know it from the desk in my office, but one of my favorite things to do is *organize*. The renovation of the choir room this summer provided an opportunity to do just that. Everything had to be removed, including the thousands of scores lining the shelves. I worked with organist and choirmaster James Busby (*sometimes wearing a particle mask*) to catalogue, count, and cull where needed, resulting in the northeast Sunday school room being jammed to the hilt with fifty plus bankers boxes of music. The motets and anthems alone filled almost thirty boxes, and the masses another eighteen. Psalms, descants, and other miscellany filled several more. All in all, our music library consists of more than 600 motets and anthems, and more than 225 mass settings, encompassing everything from early medieval works to Renaissance masters such as Victoria and Byrd, to contemporary composers of note such as Charles Shadle and Nico Muhly.

I've been a member of the Schola since 1984 (with a brief hiatus in the early 90s), and I began to

serve sort of informally as James's music librarian sometime after I came back to sing in 1994. The music library as it stands today has been significantly improved and enhanced by James during his twenty-year tenure. I'm glad to be a small part of it.

The next phase of the project includes storing the mass settings and some other subsets of music in newly obtained matching filing cabinets, while filing the motet scores in Gamble Music storage boxes in the beautiful glass fronted cabinets that line the north and south walls. Putting everything back should be more efficient and less time consuming than the painstaking process of removing everything; which literally meant examining every copy of every score (more than 20,000 all told) in the entire library.

With the refurbishment of the room and the upcoming task of refileing I can happily predict that the choir room will never again be as organized, as clean, or as beautiful as it will be for the start of our fall programs on September 15th. Come and see.

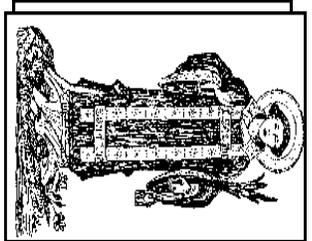
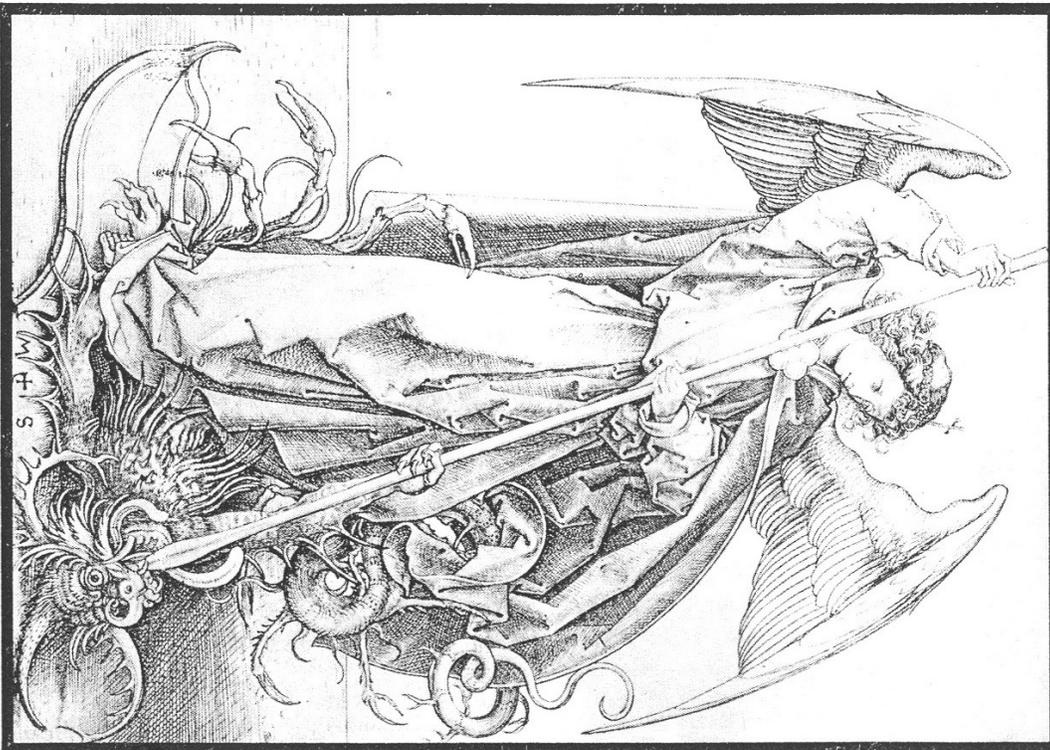


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