



The S. Stephen

The monthly news at S. Stephen's Church in Providence

February/March, 2010

Vol. 9, No. 6

From the Rector

My dear people:

Sometime in the past twenty or thirty years, it became fashionable to say that it is better to “take something on” than to “give something up” as a Lenten discipline. Yet I can't help thinking that posing the question in terms of these two alternatives risks missing the point of Lent on a grand scale.

In a culture focused on self-help, perceptions of the point of Lenten discipline have gradually shifted from the goal of subduing our gratifications for the sake of the fuller life to which God calls us to the notion that we give up (or take on) something to improve our own well-being. In this context, Lenten disciplines all too easily become exercises in self-improvement. Lenten fasting becomes a plan to lose weight, eat healthier foods, and exercise more. I'm told that some people even take on as Lenten disciplines reading books on such topics as effective time management or positive thinking. These activities may well be worthwhile in themselves, but they are closer to New Year's Resolutions than to anything resembling the Church's intention for the season of Lent.

In the Ash Wednesday service, The Book of Common Prayer enjoins us to pray for “new and contrite hearts” so that we may be “put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior and the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.” The emphasis is on recognizing our human frailty and sinfulness, acknowledging our “wretchedness,” in the words of the Church, so that we may be truly sorry for our wrongdoing and turn to God for renewal. The point of our Lenten disciplines is not “to become better people,” but rather to come to terms with the truth that we are broken people living in a broken world – precisely so that we can open ourselves up to the gift of God's grace, which is by definition always unmerited and undeserved.

Here at S. Stephen's, our Lenten program offerings all reflect this understanding in one way or another. The Friday evening Stations of the Cross acknowledge our penitence and grief as we contemplate the sorrows of our Lord's Passion and Crucifixion. This year, the Sunday evening Lenten series will focus upon musical settings of St. John's Passion, which likewise reminds us of the price that Christ paid for our sins. And the Lenten Quiet Day on Saturday 6 March – with addresses by my friend and colleague Fr. Trent Fraser, SSC, Rector of St. John's, Newport – affords us an opportunity not only for reflection but also for making our Confession.

All of these opportunities for Lenten discipline and devotion are described in fuller detail elsewhere in this issue of *The S. Stephen*. Regardless, however, of what we “give up” or “take on” this Lent, we do well to remember that the point is to open up a space in our lives where we may acknowledge our unworthiness before God and receive the gifts of forgiveness and grace that God has promised us.

One minor liturgical change that we shall be making this Lent is that at the Sunday 10 am Solemn High Mass we shall be wearing the parish's Lenten array vestments. These vestments are associated with what is known as the “Sarum” (pre-Reformation old English) use, while the perhaps more familiar violet vestments are associated with the “Western” or “Latin” use. While I am personally inclined towards the Western use and hence the violet vestments, it does seem a shame to have as we do a really fine set of Lenten array vestments and not to use them once in a while. So, we shall use them this Lent, and possibly alternate them with the violet set in successive Lents in future years. While these vestments may look

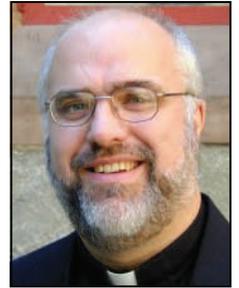
white from a distance, on closer inspection they are made of unbleached linen, and thus symbolize the sackcloth which is an archetypal biblical symbol of fasting and penitence.

Looking ahead to the Eastertide (and Spring!), I do want to call your attention to another opportunity for spiritual refreshment and renewal. During the weekend from Friday 23 April to Sunday 25 April, we shall be sponsoring a parish retreat at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, Massachusetts, with meditations by Fr. Michael Godderz SSC, Rector of All Saints, Ashmont. More information on schedules, costs, and reservations will be forthcoming in the Sunday *Kalendar*; but I wanted to mention this retreat now so that as many as possible will have the opportunity to consider participating.

In the meantime, with all good wishes and prayers for a Holy Lent, I remain, faithfully,

Your pastor and priest,

Fr. John D. Alexander, SSC



From the Curate



Dear People of S. Stephen's,

It's very difficult for me to put into words my reactions to my ordination and to all of the outpouring of kindness and generosity over the past few weeks. For me, the

overriding feeling is one of gratitude. There were so many people in the parish, across the diocese and in my family who did so much for me that cannot begin to express how grateful I am. But more deeply, I am filled with thanks that God has given me this gift, a gift that none of us, least of all me, deserve.

Several people have asked me if I feel different, and although this is not a surprising question, it isn't easy to answer. The short answer is no. I don't feel any different. I wake up and try to help get the kids their breakfasts. I go to the church and I try to say my prayers. In short, my days are just like they were before January 23rd. I'm still the same person I've always been, and ordination doesn't change that.

But it is also clear that something has changed. I have been given the responsibility and the gift of

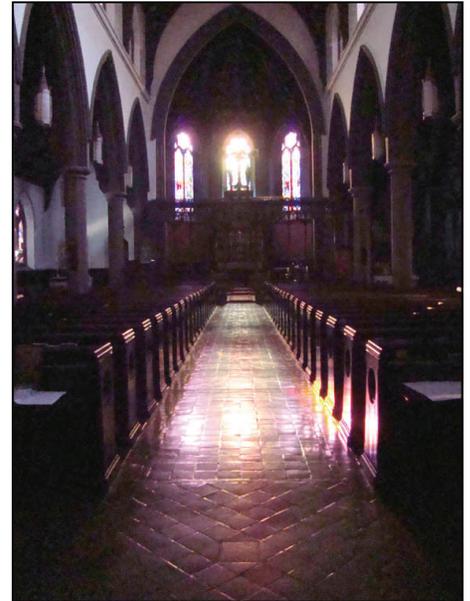
ministering to the Church in a deep and powerful way. Some people outside the Church might simply say that now I am permitted to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and hear confessions. But these outward actions say something much more profound about how the Church works, and how God works in the Church.

By celebrating the Holy Eucharist and by pronouncing absolution, my relationship to the Church has changed. And these changed and changing relationships will define my ministry for the rest of my life. Right now, I see this change as an invitation to humility. God is inviting me to put aside all my own concerns and to simply focus on the needs of his Church. And God is inviting the Church to be ministered to by yet another unworthy servant.

This kind of humility requires great faith and great courage. As I said at the parish meeting, I cannot begin to express my gratitude that S. Stephen's has been a home to me and has the courage to minister to me and to help me, in turn, grow as a minister of the Gospel.

— Fr. Michael Tuck

Lenten Quiet Day



Saturday 6 March
9 am to 1 pm

Meditations by
The Rev'd R. Trent Fraser, SSC
Rector, St. John's Church, Newport

9 am - Morning Prayer
9:30 am - Low Mass
10 am - Breakfast
10:30 am - Meditations

Please visit our website:
www.sstephens.org

Read *The S. Stephen* online. Go paperless or print your own copy. Contact Cory MacLean in the church office. She will put your name on the email list and each month you will receive the link to the online issue of *The S. Stephen*.



The work of the priesthood is done on earth, but it is ranked among heavenly ordinances. And this is only right, for no man, no angel, no archangel, no other created power, but the Paraclete Himself ordained this succession, and persuaded men, while still remaining in the flesh to represent the ministry of angels.

— St. John Chrysostom,
On the Priesthood



The Lenten Fast

may have originated for practical reasons: during the era of subsistence agriculture in the West as food stored away in the previous autumn was running out or had to be used before it went bad in store, and little or no new food-crop was expected soon (compare the period in Spring which British gardeners call the "hungry gap"). In its earliest Christian form Lent was an intense period of fasting and prayer for catechumens preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil. The word "lent" came from the Anglo Saxon *lenc-ten* meaning "spring."

According to Wikipedia

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Harmonia Anglicana by Brian Ehlers

We at S. Stephen's recently celebrated two splendid Masses with very special natures. The first, a Solemn Pontifical Mass with the Ordination to the Sacred Priesthood of **Deacon Michael Tuck** took place on a Saturday morning (January 23). The second, the First Mass of **Father Michael Tuck**, a Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, took place the very next day on a Sunday morning (January 24).

An ordination is a rare thing in the life of a parish and S. Stephen's pulled out all the stops to make it memorable. The many guests in the congregation included Michael's family, a large number of visiting priests, the Right Reverend GERALYN WOLF of the Diocese of Rhode Island, and the former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Frank Griswold, who presided. I was so pleased when two priests I know who were visiting S. Stephen's for the first time, separately conveyed their amazement and awe at the beauty of the Mass. We at S. Stephen's have had lots of practice doing Solemn High Mass, but the Ordination choreography was a giant step up from the usual.

Given that the main focus of this column is music, I should mention that I was struck by how very different the music was for each Mass. That's because the Mass settings, organ voluntaries, and motet/anthems for the Ordination and First Mass were composed during very different periods of time; a wonderful contrast and education for listeners who pay attention.

Ordination (Saturday):

Organ Voluntaries: J.S. Bach (1685 - 1750)
Mass Setting: Josquin des Prez (1440 - 1521)
Motet: Francisco Guerrero (1528 - 1599)

Father Tuck's First Mass (Sunday):

Organ Voluntaries: Jan Koetsier (1911 - 1962)* & Marius Monnikendam (1896 - 1977)
Mass Setting: John Ireland (1872 - 1962)
Anthem: Steven Serpa (b. 1976)*

The period programming seemed very appropriate. Although the music for the Sunday was chosen before we knew it would be for this occasion, it seemed that it could have been chosen intentionally as new music for Father's brand new role as an ordained priest.

How fortunate we are to have a choir and organist with such versatility in both interests and performance! And how wonderful it is to premiere a new piece written by composer **Steven Serpa** who has been a member of our choir for a number of years. The incorporation of the English Horn was haunting. Rave reviews by all. As I've said before, S. Stephen's has both the resources and the will to enhance the Holy Mystery with beautiful music: the old and the new!

*with Jane Murray, English Horn



Ash Wednesday by Carl Spitzweg (1808-1885)

A Parvulis Libera Me, Domine (From Littleness Free Me, O Lord)

KEEP me, O Lord,
from the little, the interfering and the stupid;
from the infection of irritation and anger over nothings;
Deliver me, and keep me, O my Lord.

from all promptings to decry the person or work of others;
from scorn, sarcasm, petty spite, and whisperings behind
the back;
from the dishonest honesty of frankness meant to hurt;
Deliver me, and keep me, O my Lord.

from hasty judgments, biased judgments, cruel judgments,
and all pleasure in them;
from resentment over disapproval or reproof, whether
just or unjust;
Deliver me, and keep me, O my Lord.

from all imposition of my own fads and interests
upon my acquaintance;
from burdening and boring others with
my own anxieties and ailments;
from self-justification, self-excusing, and complacency;
Deliver me, and keep me, O my Lord.

—Dean Eric Milner White



Walsingham Update — *An occasional series on all things Walsingham*

By Fr. Michael Tuck

The Walsingham Pilgrim Hymn

The village of Little Walsingham is not very large. Fewer than 900 people live there. And it's not just small; it also quite difficult to get there. There are no trains to Walsingham; the commuter line was closed in the early 1960s. The nearest highway is over sixty miles away. Even after you get off the nearest two lane road, you have to drive about four miles on one lane roads, through the villages of Great Snoring and Little Snoring to arrive finally in Walsingham.

But despite the difficulties, scores of parishes across England make a pilgrimage to Walsingham every year. Over the course of a single year, over 300,000 people visit this tiny village in Norfolk to see the Shrine of Our Lady. One of the great traditions is the singing of the Walsingham Pilgrim Hymn. The text of the 37(!) verse hymn was originally written by Fr. Hope Patten, the Vicar of S. Mary's Walsingham and the priest responsible for the refounding of the Shrine. The hymn tells the story of the Shrine – from the founding by Lady Richeldis in 1061 (verses 5-17) to the shrine's growth (verses 18-25) to its destruction at the Dissolution (verses 26-30) to its eventual re-founding (verses 31-36).

Many of the parishes who make pilgrimage rent buses to take them directly to Walsingham. And, almost like an Anglo-Catholic summer camp, one of the traditions is to sing this hymn as you take the final road into the village. People who travel by their own cars are told to start singing at the last roundabout, so that everyone is singing together. In this way, each individual pilgrimage is united with each other. Everyone sings the same hymn. And this same hymn (with a few changes to the words) has been sung since the refounding of the Shrine. There are stories of pilgrims singing it as early as 1925. The story of the hymn helps connect us to all of those pilgrims who came on pilgrimage to first shrine at Walsingham. The hymn is sung to the tune of *Lourdes*.

All glory to God in his mercy and grace
Who hath established His Home in this wonderful place.
Ave Ave Ave Maria! Ave Ave Ave Maria!

All glory to Jesus our Saviour and Lord
Whose image within us by grace is restored.



Only the ruin of the 15th Century Priory Church arch remains. Archaeology has placed the site of the 'Holy House' in its shadow.

All glory to God in his Spirit Divine.
Who hath fixed His abode in this poor soul of mine.

Sing the praises of Mary, the Mother of God,
Whose "Walsingham Way" countless pilgrims have trod.

Then lift high your voices, rehearse the glad tale
Of Our Lady's appearing in Stiffkey's fair vale.

When Edward Confessor ruled over the land
The Faverches' Manor stood here nigh at hand.

The Lady Richeldis devoted her care
To good works and penance and worship and prayer.

One day as she prayed and looked up to the skies,
A vision of splendour delighted her eyes.

Our Lady, God's Mother, in glory arrayed,
Held a House in her arms which was clearly displayed.

"Take note, my dear daughter, and build here a Shrine
As Nazareth's home in this country of thine."

"And the spot that I choose where the house shall arise
By a sign shall be plainly revealed to your eyes."

The vision passed slowly away from her sight,
But her mind held the House in its length, breadth and height.

Bewildered she pondered this message so sweet,
When a clear spring of water burst forth at her feet.

Bewildered no longer for this was the sign,
She vowed on this spot she would build such a shrine.

The finest materials her workmen could find
She employed for this House she had fixed in her mind

But though she had given both timbers and lands,
The power of the work lay in Mary's own hands.

And this was made clear when the work was complete
By the answers to prayers poured out at her feet.

And soon mighty wonders by grace were revealed,
For the sick who made use of the waters were healed.

So Walsingham then came a place of great fame
And Our Lady herself was called by this name.

And many a pilgrim to the day of his death
Took the road once a year to "England's Nazareth."

So crowded were roads that the stars, people say,
That shine in the heavens were called "Walsingham Way."

And many the favours and graces bestowed
On those who in faith took the pilgrimage road.

The Image of Mary with her Holy Son
Was honoured and feted by everyone.

The Canons and Friars built houses around
And the praises of God were a regular sound.



Medieval buildings on a Walsingham street.

And Kings, Lords and commons their homage would pay
And the burning tapers turned night into day.

But at last came a King who had greed in his eyes
And he lusted for treasure with fraud and with lies.

The order went forth; and with horror 'twas learned
That the Shrine was destroyed and the Image was burned.

And here where God's Mother had once been enthroned
The souls that stayed faithful 'neath tyranny groaned.

And this realm which had once been Our Lady's own Dower
Had its Church now enslaved by the secular power.

And so dark night fell on this glorious place
Where of all former glories there hardly was trace.

Yet a thin stream of pilgrims still walked the old way
And hearts longed to see this night turned into day.

Till at last, when full measure of penance was poured,
In her Shrine see the honour of Mary restored:

Again 'neath her Image the tapers shine fair,
In her children's endeavours past wrongs to repair.

Again in her House her due honour is taught:
Her name is invoked, her fair graces besought:

And the sick and the maimed seek the pilgrimage way,
And miraculous healing their bodies display.

Oh Mother, give heed to the prayer of our heart,
That your glory from here never more may depart.

Now to God the All-Father and Son, with due praise,
And life-giving Spirit, thanksgiving we raise.

Lent is the time for trimming the soul and scraping the sludge off a life turned slipshod. Lent is about taking stock of time, even religious time. Lent is about exercising the control that enables us to say no to ourselves so that when life turns hard of its own accord we have the stamina to say yes to its twists and turns with faith and hope.... Lent is the time to make new efforts to be what we say we want to be.

—Sister Joan Chittister

The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages

Treasurer's Corner

by Brian Ehlers

Comments on 2010 S. Stephen's Operating Budget

- Father Tuck's time is split 50-50 between his Curate duties at S. Stephen's and his Campus Ministry duties at Brown and RISD. Funding for the first comes from S. Stephen's operating budget and for the second from the Diocese, primarily from endowment fund income restricted for that purpose.

- \$14,500 has been pledged from various sources. Other internal arrangements contribute the additional funds needed for the S. Stephen's funded portion. As a result, the net new cost to the operating budget for 2010 relative to 2009 is neutral! The same pledges and arrangements are valid for 2011 as well. 2012?

- All salaries and benefits are flat relative to 2009 and are likely to be so for both 2010 and 2011.

- All of us who worked on the 2010 budget were quite mindful of the reduced income available from the endowment and cut expenses as we could.

- There is a \$15,852 deficit included in the 2010 budget. That's unfortunate but we all accepted this reality with faith for a better future.

- If capital spending can be held low, then the Investment Total Return Percent to pay both all operating and capital expenses in 2010 will need to be 5.5% versus 4.5% goal. We can live with that now but must be mindful of continued overspending our income. (Sound familiar?)

Because of the 3-year endowment value averaging formula which determines the income each year, I can already predict that 2011 endowment income will be less than for 2010. Approximately 65% of S. Stephen's income comes from the endowment. We are feeling the pinch!

The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.

—G.K. Chesterton

What's Wrong With The World, 1910

S. Stephen's Prayer Group

meets Thursdays at 12:30 pm.

For information, call Deborah Lawrence at 621-3630.

All are welcome!



How Laity Support the Clergy

by Phoebe Pettingell

Seeing the ordination of a new priest is always a moving experience, and we all found the ceremony in which Bishop Griswold laid hands on our own Michael Tuck a momentous event in our parish life together. As an Associate of the Sisters of the Holy Nativity—who were associated for so long with S. Stephen’s—I was reminded that the particular vocation of that order, and those who keep the Associates’ Rule, is to support and uphold the clergy in their ministry. Yet this is not merely a specialized calling for us. In fact, all laity are called to support deacons, priests and bishops just as they support us. We depend on them to offer the appropriate ministries of their particular vocations—ministries described in last month’s issue of *The S. Stephen* by Father Alexander in his article, “*Being Sent: Reflections on the Apostolic Ministry.*” What kinds of support can we, as lay members of the Church, offer them, so that both we and they may become more faithful stewards of the various works to which God has called us?

My Associates’ Rule instructs us to be “loyal and ready helpers of the clergy.” To this end, we are enjoined to cultivate a disciplined prayer life, interceding for all who have requested our prayers: including our bishop, priests and deacons, as well as all those who are named in our intercessions during services—those we know personally and many we do not, yet who may be sustained by our remembering them before God. Unlike secular society, which teaches that only actions are helpful, Christians know prayer to be the greatest work we can perform. This does not excuse us from doing all in our power to alleviate the needs of others, but it provides the confidence that when there is nothing we, or any human help, can provide, God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. In the darkest and loneliest moments of my own life, the knowledge that others were remembering me in their prayers has sustained me. Here at S. Stephen’s, we can be assured that, as parishioners, we are being remembered daily at the Mass; once a month each member of the parish is prayed for by name at evening or morning prayer. Just as it is the responsibility of our clergy to pray for us, it is not only our duty but our privilege to pray for them—for our intercessions on their behalf help them worthily undertake the work of their calling. The holiest and happiest priests I have known were those assured of the unfailing prayers of their parishioners.

At the heart of my Associates’ Rule, we are enjoined to “cultivate charity above all virtues, in thought, word, and act: not allowing [ourselves] any form of criticism or detraction.” Nor is it enough to merely refrain from this ourselves, while taking pleasure in listening to others do so. “Let all gossip about the clergy be firmly discouraged, especially those of the parish to which an Associate may be attached.” We know our deacons and priests are frail human beings like ourselves, prone to the same errors we fall into. Nonetheless, the dignity of their office is not helped by our running them down. Neither do gossip and fault-finding help us or them to become more godly. An old saying reminds us that “One has no right to criticize the sermon who has not first prayed for the preacher.” Nothing is more

discouraging to newcomers than to hear parishioners eagerly detail the faults of their priests, nostalgically reminiscing about how much better Father So-and-so was in the old days. We laugh, but unfortunately most of us have been guilty of indulging in this kind of talk from time to time. Exercising charity does not come naturally—it requires prayer, self-discipline and constant recollection of the harm we do when we let our tongues and malice run away with our good intentions. No better Lenten resolution can be found than to work to reign in our temptation to speak or even think ill of others.

Christianity creates mutual bonds in which we “seek and serve Christ in all persons.” We affirm this every time we renew our baptismal vows. As members of a parish, we have pretty definite notions of the ways in which we expect our clergy to serve us. Even if we take an occasional Sunday off from Church, would we not find it inexcusable if no priest showed up for a scheduled service? We expect them to teach the faith without watering it down, to visit us when we are sick and to minister not only to us but to the broader community. Their work in the diocese and in the wider Church represents who we are as a congregation so that S. Stephen’s may be known not merely by its own members, but in the wider society. In the same way, it is necessary to remember that the clergy share the same self-doubts and loneliness we suffer from time to time. They need our reassurance, emotional understanding, and friendship. An invitation to lunch or some social gathering, or the odd card or e-mail letting them know how helpful we found a sermon expresses our gratitude for what can, at times, be lonely and thankless work on their parts. We all like to feel appreciated, but should not assume that others intuit our appreciation when it is not expressed.

In the same way, we hold ourselves faithful to our particular callings, so that they may be faithful to theirs: by attending worship regularly, and by giving as generously as we are able to the parish. We need to oversee the finances of the parish as faithful stewards, providing not only for the present but for those who will come after us—think of the growing number of churches that have squandered their endowments and can no longer afford to support full-time clergy or the maintenance of their buildings. As laity, we are called to be the evangelists of the parish—it is our duty to spread the word that ours is a church where all are welcome to worship in the beauty of holiness, and that many opportunities are provided to learn more about the faith and to come into a closer knowledge of God’s will for us. We have just heard Father Tuck at his ordination promise, on his own behalf and that of his family, to “pattern your life in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people.” We are bound up with him, with Father Alexander, and with all clergy in a common endeavor to know Christ more nearly and follow Him more dearly, as the old prayer puts it. Our functions may be different: but they, we and all Christians are sent forth in the power of the Holy Spirit to perform the service God has created and called us to, for the building up of Christ’s Church on earth, that God’s kingdom may come.

Ash Wednesday and *The Christian Year*, John Keble (1792-1866)

by Karen Vorbeck Williams

It would be hard to find a more appropriate poet to quote during Lent than John Keble, the Victorian churchman and leader of the Oxford Movement, whose seminal work, *The Christian Year*, is based on the Book of Common Prayer's calendar of seasons, fasts and feasts. The book was published anonymously in 1827 and was an almost instant hit. Keble soon became a much respected poet for his times.

Bearing his father's name and following in his footsteps, John Keble took Holy Orders as a deacon in 1815 and as a priest a year later, becoming curate to his father, the Vicar of Coln St. Aldwyns. While his earliest education was at home, at his father's knee, he earned a scholarship in 1806 to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he proved to be a brilliant student and became a Fellow of Oriel College. There he remained for a number of years as a tutor and examiner. He was Professor of Poetry at Oxford for ten years beginning in 1831; and from 1836 until his death thirty years later, he was priest of a small parish in the village of Hursley near Winchester.

On July 14, 1833, Keble preached the sermon at the University Church of Saint Mary the Virgin at Oxford that is credited with launching the Oxford Movement, also called the Tractarian Movement on account of its series *Tracts for the Times*, published from 1833 to 1841. The immediate goals of the Oxford Movement were to combat secularism in the Church and liberalism in theology, and to return to the Catholic origins of the Church of England. The Oxford Movement also captured the heart of another Victorian poet, Christina Rossetti, whose life and art are closely connected to all aspects of the movement. Other important Tractarian leaders were Edward Bouverie Pusey and John Henry Newman (who defected to the Roman Church in 1845).

There are a number of portraits of John Keble, all showing gentle peaceful eyes and an intelligent, handsome face. Keble must have been a devoted son, for in 1823 when his mother died, he returned home from Oxford to live with his father at Fairford, returning to Oxford



in 1831 to take up the Poetry chair. He did not marry until he was 43, after his father's death. His wife, Charlotte Clarke, remained childless. In 1847 he produced another volume of poems, *Lyra Innocentium* which coupled Church doctrine with his love of children.

In the 1982 Hymnal, Keble's poems are used as the texts for hymns 10 ("New every morning is the love") and 686 ("Blest are the pure in heart"). In today's even more secular world, *The Christian Year* offers us a look at the rhythms and patterns of life and describes a path toward less self-governance and more communion with other Christians. Beginning in the twentieth century, many readers came to consider Keble's poetry Victorian and old fashioned but a careful look at his poem *Ash Wednesday* offers guidance, courage, and solace to the Lenten Penitent.

For a beautiful "walk" through this poem with Father Joseph Walker, visit his blog: www.joewalker.blogs.com/felixhominum./john-keble. Father Walker is an Anglican priest in Alberta, Canada.

Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another.

—Jean P.F. Richter

Ash Wednesday

*Yes--deep within and deeper yet
The rankling shaft of conscience hide,
Quick let the swelling eye forget
The tears that in the heart abide.
Calm be the voice, the aspect bold,
No shuddering pass o'er lip or brow,
For why should Innocence be told
The pangs that guilty spirits bow?*

*The loving eye that watches thine
Close as the air that wraps thee round -
Why in thy sorrow should it pine,
Since never of thy sin it found?
And wherefore should the heathen see
What chains of darkness thee enslave,
And mocking say, 'Lo, this is he
Who owned a God that could not save?'*

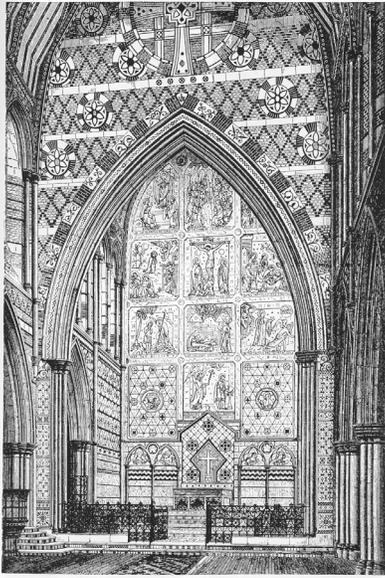
*Thus oft the mourner's wayward heart
Tempts him to hide his grief and die,
Too feeble for Confession's smart,
Too proud to bear a pitying eye;
How sweet, in that dark hour, to fall
On bosoms waiting to receive
Our sighs, and gently whisper all!
They love us--will not God forgive?*

*Else let us keep our fast within,
Till Heaven and we are quite alone,
Then let the grief, the shame, the sin,
Before the mercy-seat be thrown.
Between the porch and altar weep,
Unworthy of the holiest place,
Yet hoping near the shrine to keep
One lowly cell in sight of grace.*

*Nor fear lest sympathy should fail -
Hast thou not seen, in night hours drear,
When racking thoughts the heart assail,
The glimmering stars by turns appear,
And from the eternal house above
With silent news of mercy steal?
So Angels pause on tasks of love,
To look where sorrowing sinners kneel.*

*Or if no Angel pass that way,
He who in secret sees, perchance
May bid His own heart-warming ray
Toward thee stream with kindlier glance,
As when upon His drooping head
His Father's light was poured from Heaven,
What time, unsheltered and unfed,
Far in the wild His steps were driven.*

*High thoughts were with Him in that hour,
Untold, unspeakable on earth -
And who can stay the soaring power
Of spirits weaned from worldly mirth,
While far beyond the sound of praise
With upward eye they float serene,
And learn to bear their Saviour's blaze
When Judgment shall undraw the screen?*



East end of St. Alban the Martyr, 1863

CONFESSION IN THE ANGLICAN TRADITION

by Father Alexander

Just to the left of the high altar in S. Stephen's there is affixed to the wainscoting a brass plaque memorializing Dr. Henry Waterman, rector from 1841 to 1845, and again from 1850 to 1874. Engraved in a fine cursive script now faded to the point of being barely readable, the plaque details Dr. Waterman's many accomplishments, including that "It was

given him also to teach to some penitents the joy of Absolution ..." Dr. Waterman is indeed believed to have been the first priest in the Diocese of Rhode Island to have regularly heard confessions. It is possible, also, that the confessional in the Lady Chapel is the first to have been installed in the diocese. S. Stephen's was thus in the forefront of the restoration of private confession to Anglican life in the nineteenth century. What was happening at S. Stephen's was part of a broader history in both the Episcopal Church and the Church of England. Since the season of Lent is now upon us, it seems opportune to look again at this history. What is the place of private confession in the Anglican tradition, and how has the practice developed?

The Book of Common Prayer

To begin answering this question we must go back to the English Reformation. The compilers of the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) wanted to eliminate what they regarded as the abuses that had developed around confession in the medieval church. So, in place of the previous requirement that all Christians should make their confession to a priest at least once a year, they included a general confession said by the whole congregation followed by an absolution given by the priest during both the Eucharist and the daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer.

Nonetheless, the Prayer Book did not eliminate private confession entirely. Its liturgy of Ordination to the Priesthood made the priestly authority to pronounce absolution central to the words spoken by the bishop while laying hands upon the ordinand: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Moreover, the exhortation read to those intending to receive Communion included the direction that any whose consciences remained troubled despite participation in the General

Confession should make a private confession to a priest: "And if there be any of you whose conscience is troubled and grieved in anything, lacking comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned priest taught in the law of God, and confess and open his sin and grief secretly, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort that his conscience may be relieved, and that of us, as of the ministers of God and of the church, he may receive comfort and absolution, to the satisfaction of his mind and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness ..." (Hatchett, 450-451). In addition, the rite for the Visitation of the Sick included a rubric that the sick person was to make a special confession "if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." The rubric provided a form of absolution to be used, and noted that "the same form of absolution shall be used in all private confessions."

In short, while eliminating private confession as a requirement, the Prayer Book retained the absolution of sins as central to the priest's ministry. While this absolution was normally pronounced following a general confession made by the congregation during public worship, the Prayer Book also made generous provision for individuals to make a private confession to a priest and receive absolution along with counsel and advice.

The Seventeenth Century

The difficult question is to determine how much advantage was taken of the opportunity in practice. From the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the very idea of private confession smacked of Romanism and thus was viewed with extreme suspicion. Still, we have a number of indications that the practice never entirely died out in the Church of England and underwent a particular revival in the seventeenth century under the influence of the theologians and spiritual writers known as the Caroline divines.

For example, in his 1655 treatise on repentance *Unum Necessarium*, Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) – later Bishop of Down and Connor – defends the practice of private confession at length and offers extended advice both to penitents preparing to make their confessions and to priests preparing to hear them. In particular, Taylor commends the practice not only as a remedy for troubled consciences but also as a means of spiritual preparation for Holy Communion: "It is a very pious preparation to the holy sacrament, that we confess our sins to a minister of religion: for since it is necessary that a man be examined ... it is of better order and more advantage that this part of repentance be performed under the conduct of a spiritual guide" (Carroll, 339). Subsequently, in 1660, Taylor published his famous work *Ductor Dubitantium*, a lengthy treatise on casuistry – cases of conscience – written in part to assist Anglican clergy in giving spiritual counsel to penitents.

Marion Hatchett notes that since the Prayer Book provided no form for private confession other than the absolution, clergy compiled their own rites. In 1679, Joseph Glanville described a procedure which he had learned from "godly and

eminent divines.” This began with the Lord’s Prayer, *Preces*, *Gloria Patri*, and Psalm 139. Then he sat in a chair and questioned the penitent, who knelt beside him. Finally, he pronounced the absolution, read some sentences of scripture and Psalm 32, and said some prayers and gave a blessing (Hatchett, 452).

The Tractarians

Beginning in the 1830s, it was above all the Oxford or Tractarian Movement that promoted the revival of the practice of private confession in the Church of England. The two figures most associated with its recovery were John Keble (1792-1866) and Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882). Although Keble and Pusey tended to hold themselves aloof from the ceremonial innovations advanced by the younger generation of Anglo-Catholics known from around the 1850s as the Ritualists, the earlier Tractarians and the later Ritualists nonetheless held in common their staunch advocacy of private confession.

At his rural village parish of Hursley, Keble promoted private confession as an integral component of the pastoral care of his flock. Confession would help the parish priest to know better the spiritual struggles of his people. In one of his letters, Keble writes: “... it is sad to think, after all, how very little one knows of one’s people. We go on working in the dark, and in the dark it will be, until the rule of systematic Confession is revived in our Church.” As the years passed, Keble was much sought as a confessor by people far beyond as well as within his parish.

Meanwhile, at Oxford, Pusey began to hear confessions as early as 1838. Like Keble, Pusey became an experienced and much sought-after confessor. He regarded the practice as integral to the spiritual renewal promoted by the Oxford Movement: “I am more and more convinced that nothing except an extensive system of confession can remedy our evils” (Rowell, 92). In 1846, Pusey preached before the university a well-known sermon advocating the practice entitled *The Entire Absolution of the Penitent*. Then, in December of that year, Pusey made his own confession to Keble. Pusey had been in a deeply gloomy

mood since the death of his wife in 1839; and in response to the strict rule that he proposed for himself – including not smiling at anyone except children – Keble advised him, “for my sake, and for all our sakes, be not hard upon yourself ...” (Rowell, 38).

Nineteenth Century Controversies

As the practice of private confession spread in the Church of England under the influence of the Anglo-Catholic movement, a series of bitter controversies arose (detailed in Reed, 48-49). In 1850, for example, two priests at the church of St. Saviour’s, Leeds, were accused of compelling a female parishioner to confess and of asking her indelicate questions. Again, at St. Peter’s, Plymouth, the Rev. George Rundle Prynne was brought before Bishop Phillpotts in 1852 on charges that he had compelled orphans under the care of the Devonport Sisterhood to confess and had asked them “corrupting questions.” When it became clear that key witnesses were perjuring themselves, Bishop Phillpotts exonerated Prynne. At a confirmation service in the parish shortly afterwards, however, a mob surrounded the church, threw stones at the bishop, broke the vicarage windows, and called for Prynne to be hanged from a lamppost. In 1858, allegations were made that a female charity worker at St. Barnabas, Pimlico (in London), had refused to give assistance to a woman unless she went to confession, and that the Rev. Alfred Pole had asked her improper questions when she did. Bishop Tait suspended Pole, setting off an inconclusive four-year series of appeals. Meanwhile, in the same year at Boyne Hill in the Diocese of Oxford, a similar complaint about improper questions led Bishop Wilberforce to defend the practice of confession in extreme cases, and to appoint a commission of inquiry that acquitted the accused curate.

In such a hostile environment, the practice of confession was surrounded by secrecy. As early as 1847 an observer claimed that confession is “practiced very extensively, and, as we believe, most beneficially, in the English Church” but is “scarcely ever spoken of, even in the most confidential intercourse” (Reed, 49). Appointments to hear confessions often involved clandestine correspondence and secret rendezvous. Many early Anglo-Catholic priests heard confessions with varying degrees of intrigue designed to keep the practice hidden from hostile parents, spouses, or bishops.

In the 1870s, two controversies resulted from the activities of the Society of the Holy Cross (SSC) in relation to confession (detailed in Reed, 86-88). In 1873, the society organized a petition to the bishops of the Church of England “to consider the advisability of providing for the education, selection, and licensing of duly qualified confessors ...” A furor ensued and the bishops condemned the Anglo-Catholic view of confession as “a most serious error.” Subsequently, in 1877, a copy of *The Priest in Absolution*, a manual for confessors published by the society and circulated privately among its priests, fell into the hands of

What, not come into my own house.





RELIGION À LA MODE

Mr. Bull: "No, no, Mr. Jack Priest! After all I have gone through, I'm not such a fool as to stand any of this disgusting nonsense!"

Lord Redesdale, who read passages to the House of Lords. In response, the bishops condemned any doctrine of confession that could be thought to make such a book necessary, and formed a committee to investigate the SSC.

The controversial passages of *The Priest in Absolution* highlight one theme that galvanized the opposition. The manual suggested ways in which confessors might question penitents concerning their sins; and opponents focused upon lines of questioning regarding sexual sins in particular. As we have seen, allegations against priests hearing confessions tended to involve accusations of their asking indelicate and improper questions of penitents – particularly women penitents. In his social history of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism, *Glorious Battle*, John Shelton Reed shows how the outrage expressed against confession raised the specter of prurient priests planting the seeds of corruption in the minds of innocent young women and children. Not only might women be corrupted (if not seduced) in the confessional, but they would likely be led to disclose details of family relationships that husbands and fathers believed were none of the clergy's business. In the words of one speaker before the (Evangelical) Church Association in 1867: "As husbands, as fathers, as brothers, we will have none of it. We will protect the sanctity of our homes and the purity of our wives, our children, and our sisters from this moral inquisition, from this thumb-screwing of the conscience" (Reed, 198). Reed concludes that the practice of confession was outrageous to some and attractive to others precisely because it transgressed key Victorian sensibilities. For a woman to meet in secret with a man – even a clergyman – was improper; to do so for the purpose of disclosing one's innermost thoughts and feelings was morally dangerous; and to do so without the approval of one's father or husband was rebellion. Yet, for some, such rebellion had its appeal.

As the nineteenth century drew on into the twentieth, however, private confession became more and more an accepted part of Anglican life. One important milestone was the gradual replacement of confessions by appointment in secret locations (often the church sacristy) by confessions in an open church at publicly announced set times. This development had taken place at Saint Alban's, Holborn (in London) as early as 1869

(Rowell, 135). Groups of parishioners and visitors would gather in the church, each individual waiting prayerfully to take his or her turn with the priest. Later in the century, the installation of confessionals completed this process in many Anglo-Catholic parishes. Confession had come out into the open, and was here to stay.

Concluding Reflections

Fr. Catir's history of S. Stephen's records that by 1920 the number of regular penitents had grown to the point that a second confessional had to be installed in the church, and the confession period on Saturday extended to three hours. Certainly, a significant number of parishioners had come to appreciate the opportunity of making a private confession as one of the greatest privileges of belonging to a parish such as S. Stephen's. As the foregoing historical sketch makes clear, it was a privilege that had been won by persistent struggle throughout the nineteenth century in the face of determined opposition.

Against this background, the question to which I find myself returning again and again is why private confession is regarded with such widespread indifference today in many Anglo-Catholic parishes. Why is a practice that previous generations of Anglo-Catholics once considered an inexpressible joy now so widely considered as at best unnecessary and at worst a crutch for weak personalities?

It is easier to state the question than to give a conclusive answer. Here it will suffice to venture a few tentative thoughts. For private confession to be cherished as the privilege it is, two conditions must obtain. First, forgiveness must be seen as *necessary*; and second, forgiveness must be seen as *possible*. Earlier generations of Anglo-Catholics certainly recognized the reality of sin as sin, and thus saw forgiveness as necessary. Moreover, the early Anglo-Catholic program of increasing the frequency of celebration of the Eucharist and reception of Holy Communion entailed an emphasis on greater spiritual preparation, of which regular private confession was recognized from the beginning as a key component. But it's possible that today our therapeutic culture conditions us to discount the reality of our sins, explaining them away as symptoms of underlying psychological conditions that are ultimately not our fault. In such a culture, therapy and self-acceptance come to replace repentance and forgiveness as the path to personal growth and wholeness.

Even when we recognize forgiveness as necessary, however, it does not always follow that we shall recognize forgiveness as possible. Every parish priest has some experience of the agony of tormented individuals who are all too aware of their sinfulness, and yet believe that even God cannot possibly forgive them. Here perhaps the nineteenth century Anglo-Catholics have the most to teach us. They clearly believed that forgiveness was not only necessary and possible, but also that it was indeed *assured* through the sacramental ministrations of the Church's priesthood. Having died on the cross to pay the price of sin, the risen Christ commissioned his apostles and their successors to mediate this forgiveness to all who seek it: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20:22-23). In private confession, then, priests and penitents continue to

carry forth this mandate to the present day, joyfully proclaiming and practicing the forgiveness that God has promised us in Christ.

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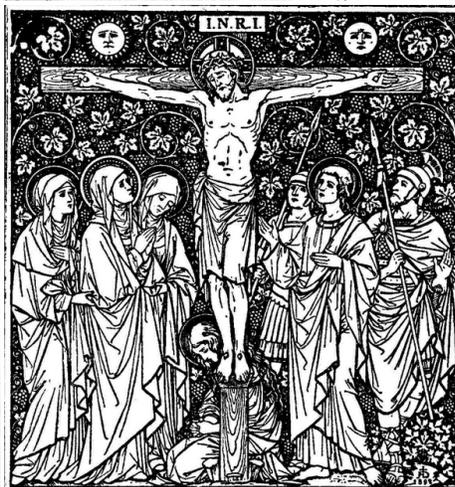


"Yet even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.

Who knows whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God?

—Joel 2: 12-14



Sunday Evening Lenten Series

'What is Truth?'
*The Passion of St. John:
Music and Interpretation*

The story of the Passion of Our Lord as recorded in S. John's Gospel has shaped the faith and identity of generations of Christians. Its richness lends itself to a variety of interpretations. Inspired by the power of the story, many composers have set the Passion to music. In their interpretations, these composers reveal their own understanding of what this text means to them. And through our responses to their

music, we better understand our own preconceptions and interpretations of this foundational Christian story. By reflecting on the way that the Passion has been set to music, we hope to enter more deeply into its meaning.

The 2010 Lenten Series will be held on the five Sundays of Lent, 21 and 28 February; 7, 14 and 21 March. We will meet from 7 to 8pm in the Great Hall and Compline will follow in the Lady Chapel.

Week 1: The Church's Liturgical Context

The Passion narrative is central to the Christian faith. This session explores how the Passion Gospel came to be used in the Good Friday liturgy of the early and medieval Church, the liturgical forms surrounding its use, and how texts like the Passion narrative have been received and interpreted in Western history.

Week 2: The Origin of the Form

The Reformation in Germany left no aspect of Christianity untouched. By bringing vernacular translations of the Bible into the culture, the Reformation paved the way for music like J. S. Bach's polyphonic setting in German of St. John's Passion. This magnificent setting not only reflects a distinctive interpretative framework and approach to the text, but also sets the stage for later interpretations of the passion.

Week 3: Beginnings and Endings

The practice of writing non-liturgical settings of the Passion has continued from Bach's time to the present. Each of these versions reflects a different perspective on and a different interpretation of the text. Contemporary settings of St. John's passion include versions by Arvo Pärt and Sofia Gubaidulina. How the story is introduced and concluded in these settings merits particular attention.

Week 4: The person of Jesus

The story of the Passion is the story of Jesus, and in each of these musical Passions a slightly different interpretation of the person of Jesus appears. Some of these interpretations have been controversial while others have been immediately accepted. One interpretation which has received great acclaim and provoked much discussion is the version of St. John's Passion by contemporary British composer John MacMillan. Of particular interest is how changes to the text itself – inclusions and omissions – affect the overall narrative.

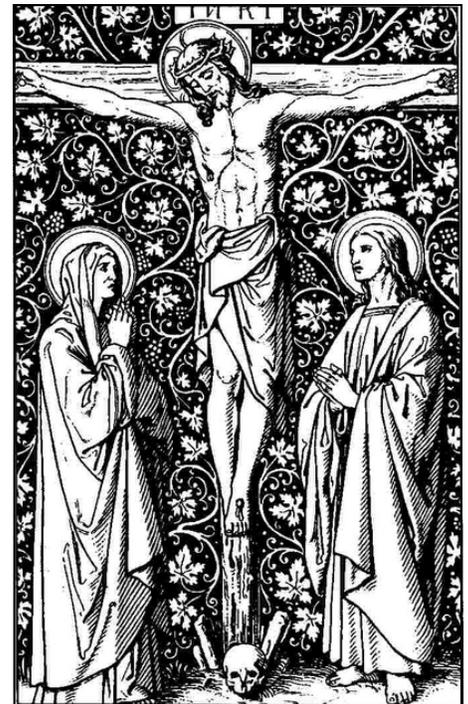
Week 5: The Passion in our Context – S. Stephen's Church

At S. Stephen's, we are not without our own musical version of the Passion of St. John sung at the solemn Good Friday liturgy. The discussion of the previous weeks equips us to look more closely at how the Passion is sung here. Our goal is to expand our awareness of the ways in which the liturgy and its accompanying texts influence our appropriation and interpretation of Christ's Passion.



Address Correction Requested

S. Stephen's Church in Providence
114 George Street
Providence, RI 02906



Friday Evenings In Lent



*Evening Prayer 5:00 pm
Low Mass 5:30 pm
followed by*

Stations of the Cross

*February 19 & 26
March 5, 12, 19, & 26*