



The S. Stephen

MICHAELMAS

2014

Vol. 14, No. 1

Dear People of S. Stephen's,

From the Rector

It is a great joy to worship and serve at S. Stephen's Church in Providence. Every day I give thanks for the opportunity to exercise my priestly ministry here – now entering my fifteenth year – among a congregation of faithful and dedicated parishioners full of love for God and his Church.

We move forward together as another program year gets under way. At the time of writing, we have just put the finishing touches on the *Programs and Events* and *Liturgical Music* brochures for 2014-2015. I am excited by the offerings we have lined up for this year and want to share a few of the activities coming up.

The choir returns on Sunday 28 September. The following Sunday, October 5, we welcome the Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, XIII Bishop of Rhode Island, on his first official Episcopal Visitation to S. Stephen's. The first Sunday in October traditionally marks our observance of the Anniversary of the Dedication of our church building; and this year October 5 is also Organist and Choirmaster James Busby's 70th birthday. So we shall have much to celebrate all round.

During the month of August, we experimented with St. John's Church in Newport on reciprocal support of each other's liturgies on major holy days. On the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6) we offered Sung Evensong and Mass at S. Stephen's and members of St. John's were invited to attend; in return, we were invited to attend the Solemn High Mass for the Feast of the Assumption (August 15) at St. John's.

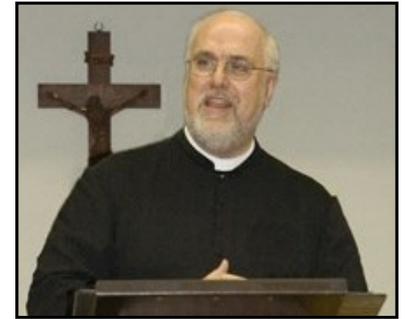
The results were encouraging and we are continuing this arrangement for the coming year. During 2015, Saint John's parishioners are invited to S. Stephen's for the Presentation (February 2), the Annunciation (March 25), and the Assumption (August 15). Saint Stephen's parishioners are invited in turn to Saint John's for the Epiphany (January 6), the Visitation (May 31),

and the Transfiguration (August 6). (On these days, of course, we shall also be offering a Low Mass at S. Stephen's for those unable to travel to Newport.) This mutual covenant benefits both parishes by allowing more efficient use of liturgical and musical resources, boosting attendance, and building relationships.

The Anglo-Catholic Devotional Societies continue to offer opportunities for spiritual enrichment. The Society of Mary generally meets on the first Saturday of the month, attending the 9:30 am Mass and then engaging in a traditional Marian devotion such as the Rosary, followed by a meeting over breakfast in the Great Hall. From time to time, also, it plans mini-pilgrimages to other parishes or shrines in the area, or excursions to points of interest such as the Russian Icon Museum in Clinton, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, the parish branch of the Guild of All Souls is organizing its activities around the Mass on the first Monday of the month, at which we pray for departed parishioners whose anniversaries fall during that month, as well as for any other departed souls for whom we receive prayer requests. Following the Mass, a meeting of the Guild takes place *in situ* in the Lady Chapel, usually involving a brief educational presentation, and then we often all go out to dinner together.

Thirdly, under the auspices of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, we are undertaking a new initiative this year. On the third Saturday of each month, following the 9:30 am Mass, we shall be offering a



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period of Eucharistic Adoration in the Lady Chapel. This devotion entails silent prayer, meditation, and contemplation before the Blessed Sacrament. (The Watch before the Altar of Repose during the night on Maundy Thursday is another instance of this type of devotion.) While some churches offer periods of “Perpetual Adoration” during which the Sacrament is exposed for twenty-four hours or longer, the more traditional length of time is one hour (known as a “Holy Hour”). Eucharistic Adoration is a powerful stimulus to prayer – especially the “Prayer of Silence.” My hope is that the opportunity to experience this form of prayer will attract some parishioners who have thus far not been drawn to the devotional societies. Come and see – literally.

On a personal note, I am pleased to report that this summer I signed a contract with Forward Movement Publications in Cincinnati, Ohio, to publish a short book of my homilies. The provisional title is *The Dawn from on High: Homilies for the Weekdays of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany*. We hope that it will be available in time for Advent this year.

Meanwhile, the editors of *The Living Church* (the bi-weekly independent magazine published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin), asked me to write the meditations for the “Sunday’s Readings” section at the back of each issue during the months of September, October, and November – a task which I completed just before Labor Day. The authors of these meditations are always anonymous, but if the content this autumn seems reminiscent of things you have heard me say from the pulpit at S. Stephen’s, you will know why!

Much else is under way, detailed elsewhere in this issue of *The S. Stephen*, and in the *Programs and Events* and *Liturgical Music* brochures. Please take the time to read them carefully and note on your calendars the items not to be missed! This letter comes, as always, with all best wishes and prayers. I remain, faithfully,

Your Pastor and Priest,

Fr. John D. Alexander

P.S. Unfortunately, we did not learn the date of the Bishop’s Visitation on October 5 in time to organize classes for those who might have wanted to be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church on this occasion. If, however, anyone in the parish would like to be confirmed this year, please let me know right away and we will organize classes so that we can present them at the next available opportunity. Bishop Knisely has indicated his willingness to return to S. Stephen’s later in the program year to administer Confirmations on an occasion other than Sunday morning; and we are eager to take him up on this generous offer.

THE TREASURER’S CORNER

By Ransom Widmer

Another program year begins at S. Stephen’s! All the details are contained in the *Program and Events* and *Liturgical Music* brochures for 2014 – 2015, which will be mailed to you in the immediate future.

It is also a time to look ahead. In which activities will our family participate? How can we best utilize our talents to support parish ministries? What can we set aside to support the church financially?

Because stewardship is so vital to our life as a parish, activities and materials are planned to aid in formulating our 2015 pledges. This process will begin on October 26th with a Stewardship Brunch immediately following both the 8 am and 10 am services. Besides fellowship, the purpose of this event is to familiarize each parishioner with S. Stephen’s financial position.

The period between the Stewardship Brunches and Stewardship Sunday, November 16th, will allow time for parishioners to consult their budget, pray for guidance, and decide upon a pledge amount. The church will supply printed materials to help with this process of discernment and decision.

On Stewardship Sunday, we will have the opportunity to bring our pledges forward, and at the end of the service the results will be announced.

I look forward to working with you all to make this a most successful Stewardship Campaign!



FR. SAWICKY'S LETTER

Last year about this time, I wrote a short piece for those who might be new to the liturgy as we carry it out here at S. Stephen's. Now, with summer behind us, Brown/RISD students back in session, and new visitors dropping into church all the time, it seems the right time for another, similar piece.

Because my office is in the Guild House right next to the doors into the church, I am often the one called on to give tours of the building. The near-universal reaction of people first setting foot into the nave is immediately to slow down their pace, take a deep breath, and look around. They always say (in hushed tones), "This is a beautiful church!" And they're right. Likewise, the near-universal reaction of first-time visitors to our daily Masses is to say how beautiful the service was. They always remark on its simplicity, and the arresting quiet of the chapel.

The Solemn High Mass is certainly the liturgical high point of the week. But as visitors consistently tell me, the rest of the week, and the building itself, make a common witness with 10 am Sunday morning: what we do here at S. Stephen's is to worship God, to the best of our ability, making use of every instrument human art can devise.

And yet, this kind of approach often falls under constant critique today, from several quarters: our brother and sister Christians remark that it can be self-indulgent, detached from "real life," ill-suited to responding to the needs of a complex global society. The "new atheists" say that worship is at best mere "hocus pocus," and at worst a malicious attempt to hoodwink vulnerable people. The instability of the world, and the abject wickedness plainly observable within it, is at a level troubling to many people, faithful church-goers among them. How does worship, and particularly the kind of worship we offer here at S. Stephen's, respond to these kinds of concerns?

The answer is rooted in the cross. Worship is an answer to the pain and suffering of the world because the cross is the great answer to the pain and suffering of the world. The cross is where Jesus offers himself to the Father and procures our salvation; the altar is where we offer that same sacrifice along with "ourselves, our souls and bodies." All of the choreography of the traditional liturgy, every piece of furniture, is designed to communicate the centrality of that sacrifice, the perfect worship which the Son of God offers his Father.

Why all the pageantry? Partly because it is our inheritance in the Western church. But maybe even more than this, it is because of the way the church interprets and expresses spiritual truth. For Jesus to be the Word of God requires us to hear in a certain way all other words; for Him to be "the visible image of the invisible God" requires us to see in a certain way all other images. Jesus points always to the Father who sent him; words and images point always beyond themselves towards God who is their final referent. There are therefore multiple layers of meaning in any act of speech which God inspires. To employ all the arts in worship is to speak in such a way as to allow the greatest possible richness of spiritual expression and encounter. We won't always understand every bit of it. But it will always carry us further into the mystery of the love of God.

So what are we saying in the liturgy? What are the layers of meaning we encounter? Whether we participate as clergy, as acolytes, as musicians, as ushers, as altar guild, as greeters, or as worshipers in the nave, we are all engaged in the same project. First, we are participating in Our Lord's offering of himself to God upon the cross. Second, we are offering ourselves, with all our concerns, in exactly the same way. Third, we are finding ourselves constituted as Christ's mystical body in these acts. Fourth, we are tasting something of the fulfillment of those promises which Our Lord's passion and death make: that our sins will be forgiven; that we shall be made new, and receive the spirit of adoption as children of God; that we shall be one as He and the Father are one; that where he is, there we shall be also; and that from his heavenly throne flows the river by which the trees grow whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. All of these things together happen when we worship, and more besides.

Worship, then, is not arcane or irrelevant at all. It is the single greatest way we participate in God's plan for the redemption of the world, the solution to



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evil and suffering. The pageantry of traditional liturgical speech preserves the greatest possible richness of spiritual expression and encounter with God. The building of St. Stephen's itself cries out that the Passover Lamb of God is reigning as one slain upon his throne. In worship we join all the blessed from every age, and are enrolled in the Kingdom of God which peacefully advances through the years. The last stanza of the hymn "I vow to thee, my country," puts it wonderfully: speaking of the Kingdom of God, the author writes,

*We may not count her armies, we may
not see her king;
her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride
is suffering;
and soul by soul, and silently, her shin-
ing bounds increase;
and her ways are ways of gentleness, and
all her paths are peace.*

The next time you come to Mass, consider contemplating these things as you join the whole Body of Christ engaged in spiritual worship. Consider that you are part of a great host in heaven and on earth, and that your work is to offer your own prayers, your own hopes and concerns, your own self, just as Our Lord offered himself. Trust that God will receive your offering with pleasure, and bring you ever nearer to him. We may be confident in hope, that this is the way the world is changed: that this is the way the peace of the crucified and risen Christ spreads throughout the world.



INTRODUCING ROBERT ARMIDON



(Editor's Note: A new member of our parish, Robert Armidon lives in Falls Church, Virginia, and is attending S. Stephen's on weekend visits to Rhode Island approximately once a month. To help fellow parishioners get to know Robert, we asked him to send us a few paragraphs introducing himself.)

I was born in Providence and grew up in Johnston, where my parents still live. I lived in Rhode Island until I left to attend the George Washington University in Washington, DC, from which I graduated with a B.A. in political science and

a minor in history. I have worked for the U.S. Postal Service for fifteen years and serve as an elected member of the Board of Trustees of the Arlington, Virginia local union branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers. I previously worked as a canvasser and organizer for the Providence branch of Clean Water Action, a national environmental group. I am a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (and past Camp Commander of the Washington, DC branch) by virtue of my great-great-grandfather having served in the Union Army in a Rhode Island regiment.

I was baptized a Roman Catholic as an infant but was confirmed in the Episcopal Church as an adult. Since that time, I have served in various and sundry capacities in the church, including those of acolyte, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, missionary to Nicaragua, and vestry member of the Church of the Ascension and Saint Agnes in Washington. With the guidance of Fr. Alexander, I am currently discerning a call to holy orders.

We welcome Robert to our parish. He now serves on our altar and we are delighted to have him among us.

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THE CALL TO CONVERSION *

(*OR: WHAT IS MISSING IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH'S STRATEGIES FOR EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH)

By Father Alexander

The Episcopal Church has entered an era of religious marketing gimmickry. At a time of declining church membership, attendance, and giving, its leadership is promoting such marketing gimmicks as Ashes to Go, Palms to Go, and Social Media Sundays – all in the seeming absence of any other coherent strategy for evangelism and church growth.

I do not mean to impugn the sincerity of those clergy and laity who engage in such activities. They report grace-filled moments in, say, encounters with passersby on the streets on Ash Wednesday; and we need not doubt or belittle their experiences. Still, something vital seems missing.

I am not really even opposed to marketing gimmicks *per se*. I've occasionally used them myself, and will likely do so again in the future. But if the purpose of such ploys is to “take the Church into the world,” the unanswered but insistent question is: To what end? What do we have to offer those who take up the implicit invitation and come in through our doors?

In the Pre-Lent issue of *The S. Stephen*, published earlier this year, I proposed that the Church forfeits all justification for its continued existence in the contemporary world when it loses what I called “the eschatological perspective.” That is, the one task for which the Church is uniquely well qualified and equipped is *preparing its members for heaven*. But when the Church comes to see its mission in purely this-worldly terms – however worthy its activities – it implicitly yields the field to an array of secular organizations that can provide social services, offer counseling, or engage in political advocacy so much more effectively.

Here, I want to go one step further and suggest that the Church grows by *calling people to conversion*. This call is simultaneously an invitation and a challenge. My thesis can be stated simply. Unless the Church puts the call to conversion at the center of all its strategies for evangelism and growth, no amount of religious marketing gimmickry is likely to reverse our present decline.

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The Evangelical Understanding of Conversion

Some readers will likely be put off by the term “conversion,” associating it with often emotionally manipulative Evangelical preaching designed to bring hearers to an overwhelming subjective experience of being “saved” and “born again.”

This Evangelical understanding of conversion has bestowed a powerful legacy to the culture of American Christianity. Its roots lie in the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone, as taught by Martin Luther and other Reformers, who held that we cannot earn salvation by our own efforts. God saves us by grace alone in view of the merits of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. When, in response to the preaching of the Gospel, we place our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we know that our sins are forgiven and that, henceforth, we are saved from eternal damnation.

Two crucial points are crucial to understanding this Evangelical conception of conversion: first, it is an *identifiable subjective experience*; second, it is a *one-time event*. Many years later, Evangelical Christians can often tell us the exact hour, day, and date it happened. For them, the rest of the Christian life is really nothing more than a response of thanksgiving to the salvation wrought in that one decisive moment.

At various times in history, this Evangelical approach has been enormously successful in generating church growth. People who undergo such an overwhelming experience are likely to become faithful church members. One of my seminary professors – himself an Anglican Evangelical – once remarked to me that the great virtue of Evangelicalism was that it challenged people to make a decision for Christ that would have life-changing and (ideally) lifelong consequences.

The Broad Church Alternative

The unpleasant side of this Evangelical preaching was that it tended to rely for much of its force on the implicit or explicit threat of hellfire and damnation. The underlying theology was that all people are born in a state

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of sin by which we merit eternal punishment. Only by accepting God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ could we escape the common fate of the great mass of unredeemed humanity.

Sometime in the nineteenth century, if not before, a great many people in the English-speaking world began to find such a doctrine abhorrent. Liberal Protestantism began to emphasize God's love over and against God's wrath. A creeping Universalism began to supplant the Church's traditional doctrine of Hell as the eternal destination of those who knowingly, deliberately, and decisively reject God's love and goodness. (Admittedly, Hell had not often been presented in these terms.) If God is really a God of love, liberal Protestantism reasoned, then in the end everyone must be saved.

Nineteenth century liberal Protestantism thus substituted the Social Gospel – building a better world here in this life – for helping people to get to heaven in the next as the Church's primary mission. Much of the contemporary Broad Church seems to have inherited this nineteenth century liberal Protestant mentality (most recently updating it with talk about the "missional Church" and getting on board with "God's mission in the world").

The term "conversion" seems almost entirely absent from the Broad Church vocabulary. Indeed, apart from lip service to the Baptismal Covenant as a set of standards of Christian behavior, what seems missing from the Broad Church's repertoire is any challenge to its members to *change* as the result of their Christian profession. God loves us just as we are, after all. And we're all going to heaven anyway.

The closest the Broad Church comes to a language of conversion is in its emphasis on Christian "formation." Broad Church parishes make a great deal of programs designed to help young people reach a "mature and adult faith" – defined in terms not so much of theological orthodoxy as of knowing what one believes and why, and of "owning" one's personal faith – by the time they are presented for Confirmation at the age of sixteen to eighteen. (By contrast, the Catholic understanding tends to be that children most need the grace of Confirmation at about eleven to thir-

teen, just as they are *entering* the turmoil of the adolescent years.)

Beyond Confirmation, ongoing Broad Church efforts at Christian formation aim at helping people to "discern their gifts for ministry." The underlying premise is that while getting to heaven is no longer the primary purpose of participation in the Church's life, all baptized people are nonetheless called to exercise some form of ministry in helping the Church fulfill its mission ("God's mission") in the world (almost always defined, again, in purely this-worldly terms).

The merit of this Broad Church vision is that it is reasonably clear in what it is offering outsiders in its invitation to participate in the Church's life understood as a program of formation for lay ministry in the world. What seems doubtful, however, is whether such a vision can be compelling enough in today's culture to reverse the current decline. The Broad Church vision may well be the vision of a dying Church.

The Catholic Understanding of Conversion

I write as an Anglo-Catholic, and the Catholic understanding of conversion is significantly different from the Evangelical one. The two chief differences are that the Catholic tradition sees conversion not as once-in-a-lifetime but lifelong, and not primarily as a subjective experience but as an objective process of change and growth. The word "conversion" comes from the Latin *conversio*, "to turn," and it describes a movement of turning away from sin and towards Jesus Christ.

In the life of the individual, Christian conversion often begins before baptism and lasts until death. (In the Catholic understanding, indeed, conversion continues *after* death in the final purification that the soul undergoes in the state known as Purgatory.) Still, Holy Baptism is the focal moment, where the terms of Christian conversion are clearly defined. In the 1979 Prayer Book – which essentially follows the ancient

Catholic baptismal rites – the candidate is required to make three renunciations, and three affirmations (or "adhesions").

In sequence, the candidate renounces Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God; the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God; and all sinful desires that

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draw us from the love of God. (These three renunciations correspond to the more explicit renunciations in earlier rites of the world, the flesh, and the devil.)

In some ancient baptismal liturgies, the candidates made these three renunciations facing west, in the direction of the setting sun, as if rebuking and repudiating the forces of darkness. Then they turned to face east, towards the rising sun (and symbolically towards the Lord who will come from the East on the Last Day), and made the affirmations.

Significantly, in the 1979 rite, the first affirmation asked of the candidates is, “Do you *turn* to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?” Here the image of conversion, turning, is made explicit. One is then asked to put one’s whole trust in Christ’s grace and love, and to promise to follow and obey him as Lord. Together, these renunciations and adhesions set the agenda for the lifelong process of Christian conversion. They constitute a *huge* challenge to anyone who takes them seriously. They merit frequent re-reading and meditation.

From a Catholic perspective, then, the call to conversion is the call to live out our baptismal renunciations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, while turning to Jesus Christ as the Lord whom we trust, follow, and obey. Those who accept this call will want to make use of the ancient practices that the Church provides for our spiritual edification and growth: including regular Mass attendance, daily prayer, and periodic self-examination and confession, for starters.

By living the baptized life we can and often do make the world a better place by serving our neighbors and those in need. Nonetheless the primary motivation for following through on these vows is preparation for the life of the world to come. (This is emphatically not to say that those outside the Church cannot be saved. Who gets into heaven and who does not is ultimately God’s business and not ours. As Catholic Christians we are called, however, to prepare ourselves for heaven in *this* way, by *these* means. And we are called to invite others to join us.)

Conclusion

Above, I proposed that contemporary strategies of evangelism and church growth cannot be successful

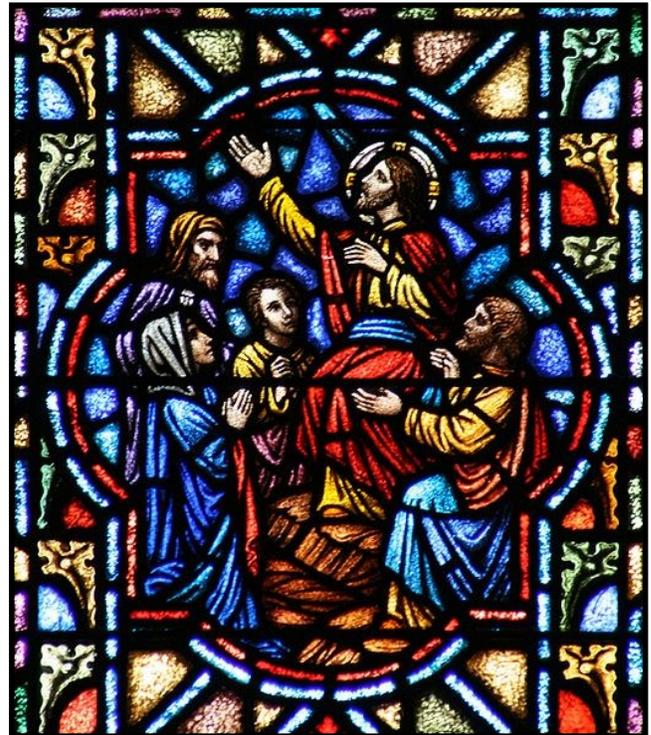
unless they give central place to the call to conversion – understood precisely as the challenge to enter into a lifelong process of change and growth whose final end is attained not in this world but in the next. Churches that communicate this invitation clearly and positively are more likely to grow than churches that rely solely on clever marketing gimmickry.

They will grow, moreover, not only by attracting new members, but also by developing the spiritual lives of their existing members. Articulating a clear call to conversion will likely stimulate spiritual renewal and revitalization within the parish – which will in turn attract new members as well.

As a thought-experiment, then, I close with the following two questions: How would our common life at S. Stephen’s change if more and more of our members came to an explicit

understanding of the primary purpose of our life together as conversion to Christ and preparation for heaven? And what would our parish life come to look like as the result?

Unless the Church puts the call to conversion at the center of all its strategies for evangelism and growth, no amount of religious marketing gimmickry is likely to reverse our present decline.



Sermon on the Mount

LEARNING THE MIND OF GOD

By Fr. Sawicky

This sermon was preached by Father Sawicky on August 31, 2014, the Sunday of the Labor Day Weekend.

This is move-in weekend at Brown (as many of you may have noticed if you tried to park on the street!). Some of our young people here at S. Stephen's are also returning to college. Our youth have all gone back to school: some starting high school for the first time, others in middle school, and the younger ones in elementary school. This is Labor Day weekend, and all of us are conscious of the impending close of summer and the start of a new "program year." It seems fitting this morning to reflect a little on the task and privilege of learning: what it is that we do when we study, and where it is that our learning leads us.

In the classic Western understanding of the life of the mind, there are three major categories into which all study falls. All three are necessary in order to create a well-ordered person. First is the world around us. Mathematics springs immediately to mind, and the natural sciences: physics, astronomy, biology, geology, chemistry, and their "Applied" derivatives; also certain categories of philosophy, and others. These are subjects which teach us the basic structures of our world. Their methodologies lead their practitioners ever more deeply into the fabric of material existence, and their insights are invaluable.

This kind of learning is not the purview of experts alone. Children learning to distinguish colors are equally engaged in this process. So are youth learning the periodic table of the elements. So are adults on their morning commutes, traversing and internalizing the geographic contours of their neighborhoods and cities. We are all citizens of the world around us, and each of us is presented daily with opportunities to learn something about it, to grow in understanding of how this world works.

The second major category of inquiry in the classic Western conception of the mind is the human person. This is where subjects like history come most clearly into play, and more of philosophy; art, music, and literature; also economics and ethics, questions of justice, and how people in states ought to live together with their fellow citizens and with their fellow states. The life of the mind itself belongs in this category. Questions like, "What makes up the human person?"

What makes up myself? What should my hopes and dreams be, and how do I account for things like conscience and guilt and moral aspiration? It might be obvious the kind of contribution these questions make to society: ideals to strive for, principles to live by, systems to govern our common life, so that the greatest benefit for the most people is achieved.

We usually think of liberal arts colleges here, and economists and book publishers. But children learning to share their toys with their friends are engaged just as deeply in this kind of study (if not more so!). The whole process of growing up and constructing our lives in this world is rife with questions of the human person.

The third major category of learning in the Western conception of the life of the mind is God. So important is this category that great thinkers and professors from Augustine in the 4th century to Kierkegaard in the 19th understood God as the summit, the single necessary conclusion, to all other kinds of inquiry. Not because science is unequipped to answer its own questions; not because a human being is incapable of determining his or her own course in life; but because each thing, in its own way, points ultimately away from itself towards its own appointed end. As pattern points to order, as color points to splendor, as law points to justice, so does everything point to that which is beyond it towards that which gives it form and purpose. In this way everything points to God: not to fulfill a lack of human ingenuity, but to point to what is creation's natural fulfillment.

We may think that to know God is the solitary, heady purview of theologians and clergy. But because of his own choice to reveal himself, we can all know God. A friend of mine is a priest in Orlando, and has written an article in the latest *Living Church* describing a strange and beautiful experience. It was a Sunday, and he was at the altar saying the Lord's Prayer with the congregation. In the midst of all the voices, he heard the voice of his two-year-old son saying the words along with everyone else. He and his wife hadn't taught him the words yet! But this two-year-old had so imbibed the saying of that prayer after repeated exposure, and had been so impressed with the spirit of everyone

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LEADING THE FAITHFUL ASTRAY: HERESIES—WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY MATTER

By Phoebe Pettingell

The Rector has asked the Copy Editor to write a series of articles about heresies ancient and modern. This first installment will be followed in subsequent issues by discussions of specific heresies.

The word “heresy” gets bandied about a lot in Church circles, these days. The blogosphere is noisy with charges from both the right and the left that various positions are heretical or that this person or that—from Pope Francis, The Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Presiding Bishop on down—is a heretic. All organized religions, not just Christianity, periodically declare certain beliefs to be false, leading the faithful astray. Just as *orthodoxy* means “right praise,”—acknowledging the deity in all his glory—*heresy* means deliberately choosing the wrong, disseminating false doctrines. For Christians, heretical ideas are those that teach false beliefs about the Godhead, the Incarnation, Salvation, and the relationship between God and humanity. Although God’s revelations are unchanging, the theology that interprets them so that they can be properly understood continues to develop so that each age may be better able to express the mystery. Yet sometimes certain explanations distort and warp the faith they are trying to explain.

Heresy is *not* a matter of private judgment. The classic heresies, of which more later, were declared as such by one or another of the Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church—gatherings where bishops from all parts of the Christian world met together. These councils weighed matters of doctrine according to their faithfulness to the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, and so shaped Christian theology. Out of them came, among other statements, the Nicene Creed. The first seven Ecumenical Councils—from the First Council of

Nicaea in 325 AD to the Second Council of Nicaea in 745—are accepted, in whole or in part, by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and by Lutherans and Anglicans. The importance of these convocations cannot be overemphasized in safeguarding the integrity of the Tradition as it was passed on from generation to generation.

Why, some people may ask, wasn’t Scripture sufficient to safeguard them? Because even before the

New Testament was written down, Christians strove to live by and disseminate Christ’s teachings as they had learned them from the Apostles. The development of the doctrines that would safeguard understanding of the Incarnation with its salvific power, and hold its paradoxes in tension, was an ongoing work from the second century onwards. Furthermore, as Chris-



First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea—325 AD

tianity spread, it encountered a variety of cultures. Translating the Gospel into them raised ever-new challenges. Certain books were not written until the 2nd century and it took considerable time for them to be disseminated and for the authentic ones to be determined from a plethora of others. The canon of the New Testament was not formally accepted by Eastern Churches until 692, nor by Rome until the 16th century, although by the middle of the 4th century most Christians were using the 27 books we now know. Still, the status of the Letter to the Hebrews, James, Second and Third John, Jude, and Revelation continued to be debated in the West well into the 1500s. The books of the New Testament were chosen not only because of their apostolic authorship or preservation of eyewitness testimony, but also because of their conformity to the

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Rule of Faith, which the Christians had learned from the Apostles, so that the formation of the Canon is itself a development of the Tradition. *The Bible* is a vast and diverse collection of books written in different genres, and the Creeds and Ecumenical Councils give us the authentic interpretation of Scripture's essential teachings, whereas heresies pick up on this or that bit of Scripture and run with it to the exclusion of all the other bits.

The Early Church Fathers tended to write as though heretics were outsiders, secret adherents of other religions, trying to contaminate the Apostolic teaching with ideas imported from other faiths. However, contemporary patristic scholars point out that while this was sometimes true, at other times, as still happens today, certain insiders promulgated theologies that, in attempting to clarify some point of doctrine or make it more compatible with the surrounding culture, created problems that ultimately undermined the truth. In this way, certain heresies actually spurred on the "thinking through" of right doctrine, as subsequent articles in this series will illustrate.

One of the hallmarks of heretical ideas is that, however well intended, they fail to maintain the essential paradoxes of Christianity: for example, that God is One and yet Three; that Jesus Christ is True God and True Man, or that Christ's death on the cross was not defeat but victory over the powers of sin and death. The Christian story is told in both the Old and New Testaments and Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law, not its overthrow. These paradoxes hold seemingly contradictory affirmations in tension. Heresies typically emphasize one side of the paradox to the exclusion of the other – for example, stressing Christ's divinity at the expense of his humanity – in ways that lead to false beliefs that, in the end, undermine our relationship with the divine, and erode the community of Christians.

None of this is to deny that sometimes, in the name of countering heresy, people have committed brutality in the name of religion. The burning alive of men and women remains one of the darkest chapters of Church history, and such atrocities were committed

by most power groups during certain eras. England's Elizabeth I was as savage torturing and executing Catholics as her older sister "Bloody Mary" had been with Protestants, and Calvin burned Michael Servetus, the founder of Unitarianism, at Geneva. Warring Christian sects caused the Shogun Tokugawa to banish the religion from Japan in the 17th century.

"Identifying the "that" which we don't believe helps us to understand the "this" which we do believe, and brings us ever closer to following God's will and readying ourselves to enjoy eternity in his presence."

Within the Episcopal House of Bishops, heresy trials have been less than edifying. In 1924-25, the Bishop of Arkansas, William Montgomery Brown, was convicted of heresy because he believed Communism was the fulfillment of the Christian society. Significantly, after his expulsion from the House of Bishops, he was offered episcopal ministry in both the Old Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches. Subsequent, less successful trials

have focused more on the social views of the defendants than any doctrinal positions. Confusing orthodoxy with the cultural status quo muddies the waters and reinforces the commonly held but erroneous notion that the charge of heresy is used by the Church to quash those who would challenge its power.

In subsequent issues, I will be discussing some of the classic heresies: where and how they originated, what they taught, and why they were, and still are dangerous. Certain heresies crop up again and again throughout the history of the Church to lure the faithful away from the flock, and even new ones often turn out to have certain elements of those that troubled the Early Church. The good news is that study of the classical heresies helps us to understand the basic beliefs, teachings, and commitments of orthodox Christianity all the more fully, precisely because every affirmation is implicitly accompanied by certain negations: We believe *this* and not *that*. Identifying the "that" which we don't believe helps us to understand more fully and accurately the "this" which we do believe, and brings us ever closer to following God's will and readying ourselves to enjoy eternity in his presence.



THE CARE AND KEEPING OF S. STEPHEN'S

By Cory MacLean

One of my responsibilities as Parish Administrator is to function in part as the Sexton. And perhaps the most important aspect of that position is the daily management of our facilities, both inside and out. Things happen, things get noticed, and it's part of my job to address these issues as they come up, and sometimes to anticipate work that needs to be done.

I'm not the only person who keeps an eye on things. Early this past spring Fr. Alexander asked me to take a look at one of the trees in the east yard. It had lost several branches over the years, and a large section of the top of the tree appeared to be dead. It bordered the shared driveway and at its closest point was only feet from Brown's Hegeman dormitory. After consultation with Dave, Brown Facilities' resident tree expert, we worked with a recommended subcontractor to determine what steps would be needed.

In the interim, a substantial branch came down in the back driveway, drawing my attention to another tree that had long been home to a community of squirrels whose chief diet seems to be our trash bins.

The news was not good. Both were sycamore maples, prone to diseases such as cankers, and both needed to be taken down. The tree in the east yard was estimated to be between 50 and 80 years old, with a trunk roughly three feet in diameter. The tree in the back drive was rotted directly down the center all the way to the ground, easily seen when one looks at the remaining stump.

On Tuesday 5 August, a team of four hardy looking fellows from Tree-tech, Inc. arrived, with cherry picker, chainsaw, chipper and logging trucks, and spent the better part of the day taking down the two trees. They also trimmed and cabled the surrounding trees, which needed to be balanced and strengthened to face the stronger winds they will encounter without protection from their former neighbors.

It is hard to take down beautiful shade trees which have sheltered our church for so long. I think of them as sentinels, watching our comings and goings, holding the memories of how our church and the surrounding neighborhood have changed. In spite of my sentimentality, the potential damage to people and property made the decision a necessary one.

Those who use the back driveway may also notice that that beautiful elm bordering our property is gone. I caught up with Dave recently, who said the eighty year old elm had contracted Dutch Elm disease. The tree died this summer, in spite of several attempts at a cure.

Another unexpected issue needing attention this summer was the reredos at the High Altar. The panel of Saint Peter became dislodged and fell backward to lean against the sanctuary wall. Fearful that it might fall down, I removed it, which gave me an opportunity to look down behind the reredos, observing a drop of about six feet to the subfloor of the sanctuary.

The panels are held in place by curved nails, one of which had fallen out. I sent the panel to local art restorer Alice Tingley for some minor paint repair. Upon its return, parishioner Simon Newby, an invaluable resource and tremendous help, put the panel safely back in place. Thank you, Simon!

I'm grateful to be one of the stewards of our parish church. The age and scope of our buildings and grounds guarantee that I'll never run out of things to do.



Tree-tech on the job, taken from the Work Sacristy.

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praying it together, that he was compelled to pray too. My friend's son seems to know something about God that maybe more clergy and theologians should learn.

The world around us, the human person, God — these are the three great categories of learning which undergird the whole structure and program of the Western intellectual project. They are nested inside one another: studying the world leads us into a deeper engagement with the human person. Studying the human person, and chief of all myself, leads us ever more deeply into an engagement with the God who made us and the whole world. It is a beautiful, coherent system, which has undoubtedly contributed much to the welfare and peace of the world. All who engage in learning should be proud of their task, and should go about it with patience and endurance and joy.

But this isn't the end.

Knowledge of God, the summit of human learning, is exactly where we pick up in our Gospel reading today. Just before the place we began, Jesus has asked all of his disciples the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter famously replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." He gets the right answer, he passes the test, he gets an A, he is set for life. Right?

Wrong.

Immediately following that episode — as today's reading begins — Jesus teaches his disciples that as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," his purpose is to go to the cross and die. Peter insists that surely this must not be the case. Fresh from his triumphant right answer, he cannot allow that the Holy One of God, the one to save Israel, could possibly have to die. Jesus rebukes him, and leads all the disciples further into the mystery: "If any would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. For he who would save his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Jesus shows Peter in no uncertain terms that getting the right answer about who God is, is not enough.

It goes right on down the line, as it must in a coherent, interconnected system. Getting the right answer about myself and the human community is not enough. Getting the right answer about the way the

world works is not enough. It is not sufficient in the eyes of God to be right!

We're used to thinking of Jesus' admonition, "Take up your cross and follow me" as a kind of pithy advice about our hardships, disadvantages, and frustrations. "We all have our crosses to bear" we say to one another - alternatively in pity or in jest, and sometimes a little of both. But this is not what Jesus means. Jesus himself goes to the cross for being *right* about who he is. He goes to the cross for being right about how he treats others. The cross for Jesus is the place where the best of who he is, the highest good he ever achieves, the greatest love he ever offers — where all of that is rejected and crucified.

"Take up your cross and follow me." Be the best that you can be. Learn the most that you possibly can. Do the most good that is in you to do. And then? Give it up. Be willing to be crucified upon it. This is what is required, this is the last key piece of the Christian intellectual life.

Only in the darkness that follows, only in the tomb, does the light of the resurrection begin to dawn. There, in the still dark of early morning, the project is finally complete. There, where we have surrendered everything we might claim about the world and ourselves, there God makes himself known to us: not in words or images or senses,

but in his very self, unmediated by any intervening thing or process. God himself. In the dark of the tomb, our great intellectual project is reversed: we find ourselves *known*, more fully than we could ever hope to know. In that knowing, there is love, unmitigated and unending. In such darkness as this, we finally see light.

"Take up your cross and follow me, for he who would find his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Let this be our prayer for the beginning of the school year: that each of us would so encourage the process of learning in ourselves and in our loved ones that we might come finally to the place where knowledge fails and where love begins. In the meantime, let us be strengthened by our common work, our common prayer, and be built up together by the Sacrament we are about to celebrate — which is knowledge infused with grace.



The Crucifixion
Giotto, c. 1320





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*



A professional organization of which I'm a member just moments ago sent me a breezy *billet doux* announcing there were sixteen Sundays left 'til Christmas. Words escape me. Largely, anyway. While this sobering thought is duly noted, it's hard to imagine with the glorious weather we've had.

It seems we were just celebrating Corpus Christi and then experiencing the fleetest summer months I can remember. The only recourse is to look forward to what's good in the future and for me some of that is spent thinking about the forthcoming season of music at our loved parish church. A few highlights and some sidetracks follow:

The choral season commences as you might know on 28th September. It's as late a start as I can remember due to the position of Easter last and the subsequent feasts. We'll observe that date with Byrd *Mass for five voices* and use that as a warm up for what I trust will be a fine season.

The following Sunday, 5th October, we will have episcopal visitation. Bishop Knisely has heard how we do Renaissance polyphony, as requested at his Consecration, so with the Rector's wisdom we've decided it would be just the thing to do the Congolese-inspired *Missa Luba* with percussion for something entirely different. This is something to which I especially look forward.



PATRICIA VAN NESS

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For the last twenty years I've played a recital in the fall in memory of those who have contributed in substance or spirit to our music program. This will be on 19th October this year, and I will have just celebrated my birthday, a whopper. Initially I thought it would be fun to do twentieth century American music but all of it older than I am! There is a window of possibility there, contrary to what wags might say. I rethought that initial premise, so after starting with Aaron Copland, I'll do the delicious French baroque Parish Organ Mass of François Couperin with the appropriate chants sung by some of the men of the Schola. This was the way Mass was celebrated in Couperin's time with the organ commenting on the chant verses. After that I'll conclude with the epic and rarely heard *Symphony in G* of Leo Sowerby composed in 1931.



Anton Bruckner
1824 — 1896

A first for us, among many others this season, will occur on Sunday nearest All Saints and that is the Mass in C, *Windbaagermesse*, of Anton Bruckner with alto solo and two french horns and organ. Among other things of interest are a new work composed for us, sung in Lent, by Patricia Van Ness. Patty has had recent commissions from the group Chanticleer as well as The King's Singers and I am ecstatic she finds interest in our doing new music from her pen. Our own Steven Serpa, on leave pursuing his doctorate at University of Texas, is putting the finishing touches on a new Mass setting for us based on the medieval carol *Eya martyr Stephane*. Steven has grown in musical grace and is making such a fine name for himself and I'm grateful for his new work.

I'll comment in the future on other forthcoming music as well as news from the third floor and look forward to the forthcoming season.

FROM DEACON MELLO

As fall is fast approaching, S. Stephen's is getting ready for our program year. We will be welcoming new and familiar faces back to the Brown and RISD Campus ministry, our Sunday school will be starting a new session, and our choir will soon be back in full force. This autumn offers many exciting ways in which we can take part in the church life of S. Stephen's: opportunities to enrich our prayer life, serve the church, and participate in fellowship. I thought it might be helpful to give an overview and information on some of the various ways to be part of the life of the parish. If you are a newcomer, see what you might be called to. If you're an old-timer, you might want to try something new!

Volunteer Opportunities:

The Brown/RISD Campus Ministry: There are several opportunities to become engaged in this ministry by welcoming incoming students, or volunteering to cook a meal for the Sunday evening gathering. We are also starting a pilot program "Give a Student a ride". To find out more, please contact Fr. Blake Sawicky at curate@sstephens.necoxmail.com or Deacon Mello at maryannmello@verizon.net.

Sunday School at S. Stephen's: Our Sunday School and Nursery welcomes children of all ages and is held for an hour, gathering in the school rooms and nursery around 10 am. Because Sunday school and the Principal Service coincide, it would be great to have a couple of volunteers to relieve our dedicated teachers once or twice a month so they can fully participate in the Mass. As church leaders it is a wonderful gift to be able to guide our young people through their formative years in the church. Please contact Alison Huff at alisonhuff12@gmail.com to volunteer.

The Epiphany Meal site: For several years, S. Stephen's has been host to the Epiphany Soup Kitchen, serving Rhode Island's hungry. The Soup Kitchen runs every Saturday from approximately 2 pm to 5 pm. Enjoy outreach and fellowship with those whom we serve. Please contact Bruce Lennihan for more information at blennihan@comcast.net.

Ushers and Welcomers: Ushers have an important role in welcoming parishioners and guests to S. Stephen's. Whether a visitor is attending one time or looking for a church, having a friendly, welcoming face to help navigate and get settled is reassuring. Please contact Head Usher Bruce Lennihan at

blennihan@comcast.net. If you would like to join the Welcomers Committee, be in touch with co-chairs Ed Hooks at EHooks716@cox.net or Cathy Bledsoe at CBledsoe1@gmail.com.

Coffee Hour Host: The ministry of hospitality has always been an important part of S. Stephen's and our coffee hour is a great opportunity to continue this tradition. We have several coffee hour teams and if you would like to join a team or start a new one please contact Sue Brazil at SueB265@hotmail.com.

Serving at the Altar: Being a servant at the Altar is a way of serving God and his people during worship. Because we have Mass every day, servers are needed during the week as well as on Sundays. Please contact Father Alexander at rector@sstephens.necoxmail.com.

Altar Guild: The Altar Guild is a wonderful way to serve God and the church. As we offer Mass every day, you can imagine how busy the Sacristy is. If you are interested in learning more about the Altar Guild and their ministry of work, please contact Sacristan Phoebe Pettingell at Phoebe1446@aol.com or Altar Guild President Bill Dilworth at billydinpvd@gmail.com.

Special Events Volunteers: Occasionally, S. Stephen's has special programs and services that include a reception afterwards, and we are always looking for volunteers who have the gift of Hospitality to share in this wonderful ministry. Please contact Sue Brazil or Cory MacLean at office@sstephens.necoxmail.com.

As Christians, we are called through our baptismal vows to serve. Reasons to deepen our commitment go beyond a sense of duty; as Christians we are called to bring Christ's light into the world and we are commissioned with the stewardship of the church, not just with treasure but with time and talent too. Good works bring a sense of fulfillment and spiritual joy in knowing we are carrying out our role as Christians in whatever capacity it may be. Trying something new, something that we have never done before may give us a feeling of renewed purpose and a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves. Becoming more deeply involved with our church community gives us a chance to experience others and their gifts and the humbling experience of sharing ours. Father Alexander and Father Sawicky are always available to help discern the next steps.



ON THE GO BY MEMBERS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

EASTER IN HUNGARY

On Easter morning my family and I went to church at the St. Stephen's Basilica in the Pest side of Budapest. The choir sang beautifully. After church, we went home and began preparing the food for our small feast. A few hours later, our two guests came with some food that they had made. We ate Kalacs (sweet bread) and ham, eggs, turos torta (cheese cake) for dessert. After dinner we talked and cleaned up. What a wonderful Husuet. *-Emese Benziger*

While we were in Hungary both Emese and I went to school. It was bilingual school. It means that some subjects were taught in English and others in Hungarian. I learned Hungarian grammar. Also I started to learn to write Hungarian. The school started at 8:00 am. Most of the days we had six 45 minute periods and in between each period we had 10-20 minute breaks!!!! This was our time!! We could go outside or stay inside. I will miss that in middle school. *-George Benziger*



Saint Stephen's Basilica, Budapest, Hungary

SUMMER AT ECC

Summer at E.C.C. is different from other summer camps. Each morning and evening we attend Mass. In the mornings, we invite God to come with us on our journey throughout our day. We begin our day with breakfast, followed by the service. Then we raise the U.S. flag and camp flag and sing songs. Then we have rotations, waterfront, crafts, chapel or activities. Waterfront is when we play at the beach, swim or kayak. Chapel is when we learn about God. Activities is when we play games. After, we have lunch and quiet time and then other activities until dinner. Then we have church, thanking God for coming with us throughout day. During all of this we have a big loud bell to tell us when to rotate and that is my favorite part, the bell. I also love the friends and staff. The staff make camp so much fun. *-Cailyn McNamar*



GRACE CATHEDRAL

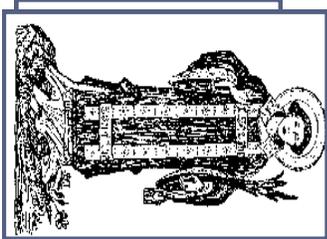
This summer when I visited my grandmother in Oakland, California, I had the opportunity to visit Grace Cathedral. The first things that I noticed when I walked in were the hundreds of colorful ribbons hanging from the ceiling. The ribbons were a symbol of the connection between heaven and earth, carrying prayers, dreams and wishes up the ribbons to heaven and grace streams down the ribbons to those in the pews below. They swayed back and forth peacefully, and shimmered in the light from the stained glass windows. The stained glass windows lined the walls on both sides and depicted events and people from the Old and New Testaments. There was even a window that showed Neil Armstrong in honor of landing on the moon. I also had the chance to walk the outdoor labyrinth at Grace Cathedral which was a very fascinating experience. Grace Cathedral is a beautiful place and I would love to go there again. *-Rose Callanan*



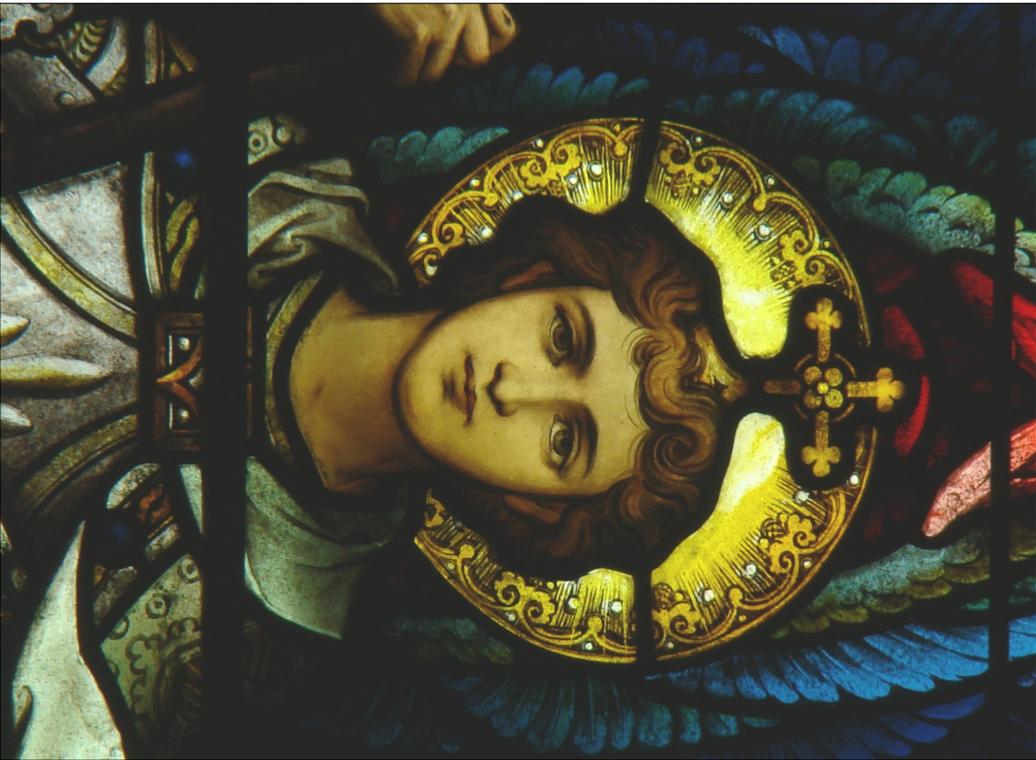


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The S. Stephen
MICHAELMAS 2014



*Detail, Saint Michael
High Altar Windows*