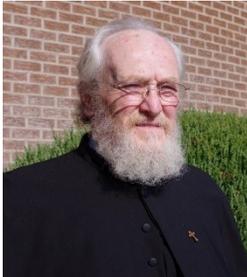


# THE TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN NEWS

DECEMBER 15, 2018

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## *Fr. Robert's Remarks*



FR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC  
VICAR GENERAL

Advent passes so quickly; Christmas approaches. It is my prayer for you that you may all have a blessed and glorious time as once again this Christmas as we cele-



## Merry Christmas

(Continued on page 16)

## *Fr. Charles Warner: His Bountiful Grace — A Sermon for Advent IV*



FR. CHARLES WARNER

### Jesus as the New Covenant

When Jesus was thirty years old He was baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist, on the River Jordan. The New Testament tells us that the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth was a watershed moment in human history. C.B. Moss points out in his book, *A Summary of Faith*, that “*God the Holy Ghost filled His human nature with power for the work He had to do.*”(page 13) Indeed, for three years Jesus preached, healed, and taught. He picked His Apostles to be the witnesses of His Resurrection, to preach His message and to

govern His Church.

In our Gospel reading for Advent IV, John the Baptist directs our attention to Jesus who he proclaims as the ‘*Lamb of God*’. The Pharisees asked him, “*Are you the Messiah?*” He tells them in a rather straightforward manner that he is not the one they are looking for. But he also adds that he is the one who is paving the way for the One they are asking about and that his role is to preach to those who will take the path to the Messiah. John the Baptist tells them that he can only baptize with water, but the One after him will baptize also with the

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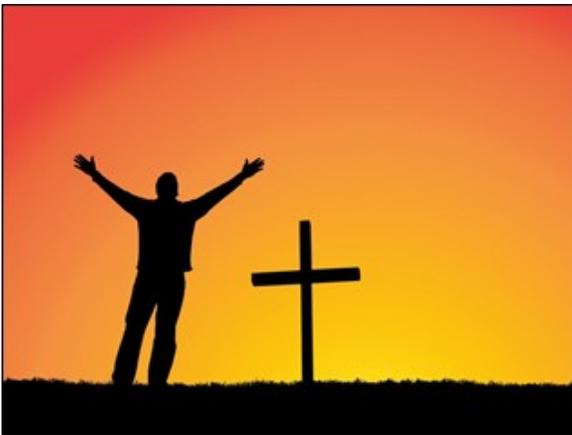
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*Fr. Charles Warner: His Bountiful Grace—A Sermon for Advent*

Spirit. It is John the Baptist who introduces us to a new relationship with God.

A Foundation of Freedom and Hope

I believe that John the Baptist was put on this earth to simply remind us that humanity falls short of God's expectations and as a result the only way to attain a right relationship with God is through His Grace and Mercy, and *'the Way'* to unity with God is through Jesus who is the Lamb that was sacrificed for us. Jesus enables us to obtain righteousness. Again, John is preaching about our release from Hebraic Law because it limits our freedom to enter into this new covenant or relationship with God.



C.B. Moss writes about how without Jesus Christ, we are *"like slaves in a prison, chained, beaten, and without food or light."* (page 17) The remedy to this is to become more aware of our freedom. This is attained by our being *fed, healed* and *made stronger* (spiritually and otherwise) so that we can come into the world knowing how to live as free people. The importance of being able to enter into this new relationship as free people is that it allows God's word to dwell within us.

St. Paul encourages us to *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* I believe that the message here is that we should rejoice in the arrival of Jesus who is, as the John the Baptist tells us, the Lamb of God that takes away the Sin of the World! A result of our rejoicing is that we can become awakened and cleansed (fed, healed and made stronger) by His entering into our lives. This is the whole purpose of the season of Advent. John the Baptist sets off the alarm bells by shouting to the world that something mighty big is happening; something transformative.

John wants us to know that with the arrival of Jesus, we are given a reason to have Hope in a turbulent world. Without this Hope life can be very difficult, confusing, and hard to navigate. During Advent, Hope is manifested through our communal rejoicing of Jesus' imminent arrival. It is the answer to the prayer that we pray on this fourth Sunday in Advent; that God, through His Son, Jesus, will come among us (Emmanuel)

and by doing so He will change our lives by His very presence in the world.



Our Christian Duty: Cultivating God's Grace

With Jesus Christ there is Hope and Freedom. Most importantly, we have a foundation to build upon in the person of Jesus Christ and we are to bear witness to this fact. Our mission is to go out into the world and present His Good News.

The Good News is that Jesus has freed us from a sinful world by being God's



## *Fr. Charles Warner: His Bountiful Grace—A Sermon for Advent*

Sacrificial Lamb for all of humanity; from that moment on it became a world that could no longer destroy us or kill us. Our belief in this new relationship binds us together with the Divine. Our Christian faith make us one with the Trinity. We are now in kinship with God the Father that creates us, God the Son, who is Jesus, that redeems us and God the Holy Spirit that Sanctifies us. But in any good relationship we must do our part to keep the bonds strong and together. C.B. Moss teaches us that it is important for Christians to be taught their duty to God because He saved humanity and therefore each of us must give ourselves over completely to the service of others as “*Christ's soldier*”. (page 21)

Moss describes it as making three promises and keeping them. I would describe it as cultivating God's Grace. First, the Christian must promise to “*resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil*”. (page 22) Secondly, he or she must promise to believe what the Holy Spirit is teaching them as necessary for salvation, in particular the Creed. And finally, the Christian must promise to obey God's commandments, most importantly the Ten Commandments.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to make disciples of all nations. It is therefore our duty to bring all non-Christians to the Lord so that they may serve others by living a “*holy life*”(page 29), teaching the Gospel, and persuading them to participate in the Sacraments. Our duty toward our neighbours is to love them as ourselves. After all, it is our Christain duty towards our loving God that we should also love one another.

### Through His Bountiful Grace

Through His bountiful Grace we have been gifted with the promise of Hope. It is the kind of Hope that gives us the confidence that we will be united “*with God in Heaven*”. The only way, however, to be united with God is through Jesus Christ, for He said, “*no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*” (page 35).

Through His bountiful Grace we are provided the Spiritual sustenance we need and through His indwelling our souls are awakened and cleansed. Our faith enables us to be immitators of Christ; the One who possess the foundation of Hope and Freedom for a fallen world. We are the bearers of the Good News of Jesus Christ; who is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the Sin of this World.

In the end, we are powerless without the help of God. “*Grace is what we call that help, and it comes to us by the kindness of God.*”(page 38) Let us continue to rejoice that it is through God's Divine Grace that the Holy Spirit works in us as instruments of His love. And may we continue to grow in faith as we work tirelessly in the vinyard to cultivate His most Bountiful Grace. Amen.



*Bonnie's Reflections: Jesus The Thief*



MRS. BONNIE IVEY

*“JUST AS MAN IS  
DESTINED TO DIE  
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SALVATION TO  
THOSE WHO ARE  
WAITING FOR  
HIM.” (HEBREWS  
9:27)*

**Anticipate: to expect; to look forward to; to be sure of**

The season of Advent has been changed by secular influence from a penitential season anticipating the return of the Lord, to anticipation of the charms of Christmas. The Advent wreath has four candles often said to represent “the Advent theme of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace”. This is not what the four candles originally signified.

In earlier times, candles lit on the four Sundays in Advent were associated with “The Four Last Things.” **Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.** These are the things that remain after all our earthly preoccupations flee away. Nobody escapes a confrontation with these realities. Not even the scoffers.

Advent has become focused almost exclusively on baby Jesus, who is coming to be laid in a manger. We must never forget that Jesus, the man who fought death and won, the King of all creation, the mighty Son of the Father, said he would come back on the Last Day. “We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.” (from the Te Deum)

C.S. Lewis, writing about waning belief in Christ’s Second Coming, pointed out that many dates for this tremendous event have been predicted, with no result. Such predictions are common enough that cartoons and jokes on the subject have become clichés. Lewis believed that the idea of Evolution plays a part in disbelief. He did not mean evolution as a description of changes occurring in natural organisms, but *Evolution* as the strong belief that “everything is progressively becoming better and better.” The idea of a sudden end to “*everything*” does not sit well with modern materialists. The sudden end of one’s own life is even less appealing.

Many people have published their accounts of a positive “Near Death Experience”: the person, being declared dead, comes back to life and tells what they saw, heard, and felt. Several features are commonly reported. The person “sees” their own dead body. Leaving it behind, they arrive in a dim place. A bright light appears. Moving toward it, they are met by people they recognize with joy, and are led by them to a destination. Having been resuscitated, they remember this experience as very positive and no longer fear death.

These are not, however, the only kind of experiences. Some people see horrific things. Flames. Demons. Others relive scenes from their life, from the point of view of people whom they have injured in some way. They experience deep regret and shame.

*There is no way to establish proof of the reality of either kind of experience.* Christians are better off to stick to the basics. What does the Bible tell us?

“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:27)

## Bonnie's Reflections: *The Price of Sparrows*

The word Paul used here for man means “Man, humankind” so it stands for each - and all - of us. Each individual *could* receive salvation from Jesus but not everyone is willing to enter into the right relationship with him.

“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10)

Here St. Paul is not talking about salvation, but about reward or praise for acts done in obedience during one's lifetime. This parallels Jesus' story about the master returning home from a far country to review his servants' performance. The obedient servant receives new responsibilities, while the one who mistreated his fellows is caught - suddenly and unprepared - and assigned a place among the hypocrites. (Matt.24:45-51)

Jesus warned that there would be false Christs. If we are told, “There he is, out in the desert, do not go out, or Here he is, in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matt. 24:26,27) Yet people have been persuaded, Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, that somehow Jesus has secretly returned. There are people with charts, who give elaborate explanations of a complicated process of Christ's *returns*. Plural. At least five men living today each believe themselves be the returned Christ. They were documented by a national Geographic journalist/photographer in 2017.

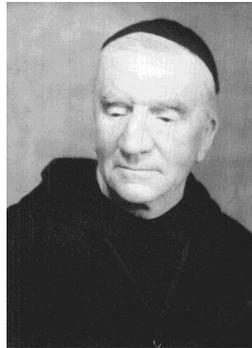
We must not be confused. Jesus said no man knows the time of his return. Only the heavenly Father knows. The angels do not know. The devil does not know. Jesus refers to Satan as “a strong man, fully armed.” Imagine a warlord who has taken over a country by means of his army. The legitimate rulers and the ordinary people are entirely under his power. He has built a fortified city, with a palace for his enjoyment. There is no escape for his wretched prisoners. The warlord puts his confidence in his walls, army, and weapons.

But suddenly! Suddenly! The wall is breached! An unexpected force greater than any other explodes into the strong man's fortress, crushing both warlord and army. The prisoners, oh joy beyond imagining! are released.

“Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” (Matt. 24: 42-44)



*Fr. Andrew, S.D.C.: The Symbolism of the Sanctuary*



Fr. Andrew, SDC

1. THE SANCTUARY LAMP

‘AS A LAMP THAT BURNETH!’ *Isa. lxii. 1.*

ALL outward things are for the expression of inward things. There are really three thoughts about the relation of outward things to inward things. You may choose for yourself which you think the most sensible and the most worthy of the great God Who is the author of this mysterious universe.

There is the Christian Science thought, which says that all outward things are a delusion and do not really exist. If it were really true that matter is unreal we ought surely to wean ourselves altogether from matter, completely and utterly; I do not think that Christian Scientists do this, as I have seen some very beautiful buildings they have built.

Then there is the Puritan thought: that outward things are bad and an obstacle to spiritual things, so that you must always be afraid of the beautiful. It was this spirit which made men think that they must wear ugly clothes, whitewash church walls, smash stained-glass windows, and destroy all the beauty in life.

And there is the Catholic theory: that all outward beauty is for the expression of inward things; that life is sacramental; that matter is meant to be the sacrament of spirit, for its possession and expression.

There are those three theories, which may be summed up in the words, delusion, antagonism, and correspondence. I do not think there are any other theories about the relation of spirit to matter, and with my whole heart I commend to you the Catholic theory which is, I believe, worthy of the God Who is the author and artist of the universe. It does not seem to me to be complimentary to God to think that matter is a delusion; besides, I have my own experience: every time I knock my head against the door—which I do very often, being tall—I cannot help believing that matter exists. Nor do I think it at all complimentary to God to think that He can have created matter to be an obstacle to Himself, or that He can have let some adverse being create matter to be such an obstacle. So I commend to your reason the Catholic theory that life is sacramental and that matter is for the possession and expression of spirit. To the Catholic, matter or flesh is for spirit; the letter or the word is for spirit; the symbol or the ceremony is for spirit, for the inward meaning. Of course the inward is ever so much more important than the outward; the outward may fail us again and again. The lamp may go out; the word may be clumsily or badly spoken; ceremonies may be carelessly or slovenly performed; but the inward meaning of the ceremony, the inward spirit of the Gospel, abides for ever. And it is to that inward mystery which the outward symbol enshrines that I wish to direct your attention in these talks on “The Symbolism of the Sanctuary.”

We begin with the thought of the sanctuary lamp as ‘a lamp that shineth’: so



*Fr. Andrew, S.D.C.: The Symbolism of the Sanctuary*

Isaiah speaks of the mystery of the revelation of God. The sanctuary lamp may stand to us for three things: it may stand for the abiding life of God—to use the proper theological expression—for the transcendent life of God; it may stand, secondly, for the abiding love of God, or the love of God immanent, as we say, in His creation; and it may stand to us for the abiding purpose of God revealed in the wonder of the Incarnation of our Lord.

First of all, what is there behind our life? That is the great question. How did we come to be? How is it that we have these bodies of ours with two eyes and lips and hands and feet—men and women with the power to think and dream? How is it that we came to be? That is the question, and it is a greater question than Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be?' The atheist says, 'It is all an accident'; the agnostic says, 'You cannot know and it is no good trying to know'; the pagan says, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die: sensation and pleasure are the only things that matter.' Now there is a grander creed than any of these, and the sanctuary lamp bears witness to it. It is the one creed that does not disappoint: a Life before our life; a Life greater than a solitary life; not a unit life waiting for something to give Him purpose, but a transcendent Life with relations in itself. That is what the doctrine of the Trinity represents. The sanctuary lamp, burning always, tells us of an abiding Life and an abiding Love; a Love that is behind our love, a Father Who has created us.

That is where we begin. We do not say, 'In the beginning was germ,' but, 'In the beginning was God.' There is nothing unscientific in this and nothing credulous. We can lean over a bridge and watch the fish in the water beneath us; they cannot live in our world and cannot see us, but we can see them. There is no need to think that human life is the limit of life; there is nothing unreasonable in believing that there is a Life looking down on us, pitying us and watching our little lives. Shakespeare makes Prospero say, 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and all our little life is rounded with a sleep'; we can say something more true and more hopeful if not so tuneless and melodious; we can say, 'We are such stuff as God's sons and daughters are made of, and all our life is rounded with a Love.' Behind our life there is something better than a fate or a force, behind our life is a Father; and we owe our existence to the act of a supreme Intelligence and a supreme Love. We are not drifting on an uncharted sea, but are being guided by a loving Providence into a haven which shall justify all the experience and teaching of the storms.

Again, the sanctuary lamp stands for the immanence of God: God abiding in His world, God in a certain sense the soul of the world—so that if God were not, the world would not be. If we were not existing in the mind and will of God we should not exist at all. The pagans glimpsed God immanent in His world in their belief in many gods. To them every wood and nearly every tree had its divinity; there were nymphs in the woods and mermaids in the sea. They peopled all the elements with gods, and in that they did so they glimpsed afar off the Catholic doctrine of the immanence of God. We do not believe in many gods in many things; but we do believe in one God

THE SANCTUARY  
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A FATHER WHO HAS  
CREATED US.

*Fr. Andrew, S.D.C.: The Symbolism of the Sanctuary*

Who contains all things in Himself, Who Himself gives to all things their form and their life.

There is great significance in the service which brings the light of the sanctuary lamp into being. It is called the service of the blessing of the Paschal light. On Easter Eve a great white taper is placed at the north, or Gospel, end of the altar, and in that taper are set five grains of incense which signify the Five Wounds; the light is kindled and blessed by the priest, and with that blessed light the taper is lighted, and from that the sanctuary lamp is lighted; it is that light which the sanctuary lamp bears always, and from the one light of the sanctuary lamp every light is lighted. Just as from that one light all the lights in the church are lighted, so from the one light in the life of God all our lesser lights are lighted; we can all think of ourselves as lamps of God lighted with His light, bearing about the light of Christ shining within us. We begin on Easter Eve with a dark church, and then, just as God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light, so the light is lighted and blessed, and first the sanctuary lamp is lighted and then all the other lights, and the church becomes full of light. That represents to us the doctrine of the immanence of God: all the light within us is the light of God. Just as we have souls in our bodies and our bodies are dead when our souls leave them, so we may have a light within our souls, and when that is not there our souls are really dead; that light is the presence of our God. The presence of God in our souls is the soul of our souls.



My children, God's law is that all things should live by attraction, and all our life is really based upon this principle. You know how the flowers are attracted by the sun; the heavenly bodies move without crashing because of the exquisite poise which is the result of that perfect principle of attraction which is called the law of gravity. The heavenly systems depend upon the attraction of one body for another body, and the supreme attraction of each sun for all those bodies within its particular sphere. In the same way, the supreme attraction of God for souls is the principle of order in God's world; when we lose the pull of the attraction of God there will come, sooner or later, a crash. If the sun lost his power of attraction to Mars and Venus, certainly Mars and Venus would crash; and when the human soul loses the sense of the attraction of God again and again there comes a crash. The holy sanctuary lamp stands for this abiding, immanent life of God in all of us. In every one of us there is not only a soul but there is also the mysterious presence of the omnipresent God.

Again, the sanctuary lamp stands to us for the abiding purpose of God, shown to us in the Incarnation of our dearest Lord. When we are trying to pray we shall do well to think of that lovely text, 'Love never faileth.' We have to try to discover what God's creed is. I do not want to have a belief unless it is God's belief. What is God's belief? It is this: 'Love never faileth.' That is His way, and that way and no other is going to win. To return good for good, that is human; to return evil for evil, that, alas! is human too, but it is not going to win. War

*Fr. Andrew, S.D.C.: The Symbolism of the Sanctuary*

breeds war, and hate breeds hate. To return evil for good is something lower than human; to receive good from a man and return evil to him is to drop beneath the human—to be what we call devilish. But to return good for evil, that is divine. And as we follow Him through His Passion we see Him returning highest good for lowest evil. *In the same night that He was betrayed* He took bread and said, ‘This is My Body which is given for you. You are going to kill Me, but My death is going to be My sacrifice for you. You are going to nail My hands to the Cross, but those hands which you are going to nail apart will for ever be stretched to welcome the world. You are going to pierce My heart with a spear, but from that heart will pour forth the blood which is going to plead your forgiveness.’ That is divine, and that is what the sanctuary lamp witnesses to. I know I can go back to Him seven hundred times seventy times; I know I can never go to Him and find anything but stretched-out hands, though I pierced them. I can never go to Him without being caught to His heart, even though I broke it. The sanctuary lamp witnesses to that.

There is another service of the Catholic Church that employs the symbolism of the lighted candles and that is called *Tenebrae*, or the falling of the shadows. In that service we come again into a darkened church, only at the end of the church the six altar candles are burning and beside them there is a pyramid of light: one white candle, and then, on either side, seven brown candles. They are all lighted, and we say or sing certain of the old psalms which all tell of the experience and the pathos of life; as they are said or sung one light after another is quenched until at last only one light remains—and that light represents Christ. Then that light is taken and hidden behind the altar though *it* is never quenched; after a period of silence it is brought forth again and set upon the altar. For that again the sanctuary lamp stands: that represents the abiding light of the life and the love of Christ our God.

All life is really, after all, the service of *Tenebrae*. Nearly every week now I hear of the death of some old friend. People often disappoint, causes often fail, hopes are often shadowed, one light after another is quenched; but faith, the light of hope and love, remains, and He, our dearest Lord, our Saviour, remains through it all. That light never goes out—the light of the love of Jesus. The sanctuary lamp, glowing with its ruby glow in the mysterious sanctuary of God, stands for those things. It is not just a pretty thing, but it is a symbol of those three great realities: the abiding life of God transcendent, the abiding life of God immanent in the universe, the abiding purpose of God made manifest in His Incarnation. Sometimes the church is empty, sometimes it is full; sometimes it is flooded with sunlight, sometimes it is in the darkness of night: but always the light burns there. And it symbolizes to us the light of God out of Whose hands we can never fall, Whose everlasting arms are underneath, whatever darkness may be around.

AGAIN, THE  
SANCTUARY LAMP  
STANDS TO US FOR  
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LORD.

*Continued next month* The Altar



*Fr. Robert Mansfield, SSC: “. . . Do We?”*



FR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC  
VICAR GENERAL

As I mentioned last month, there are questions that arise from time to time and there are some topics that arise much more often than others. Sometimes these topics are presented as statements reframed as questions by the addition of the words “do we” at the end. One of the common ones is, “As Anglicans we don’t have to go to Confession to a priest, do we?” Let’s begin with this one.

As I begin, I would note that in the February 2014 issue of *The Traditional Anglican News*, there was an article entitled *Confession and Absolution: All May, Some Should, None Must*.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this article itself will be a source of help for some questioners who might not have seen it. I would also note that a couple of months ago, as an assortment of sidebar, the words of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher were quoted in this Newsletter. In 1952, Archbishop Fisher who, I should think, would have been very unlikely to have been referred to as an Anglo Catholic, wrote, “Anglicanism has no peculiar thought, practice, creed or confession of its own. It has only the Catholic Faith of the ancient Catholic Church, as preserved in Holy Scripture and the Catholic Creeds and maintained in the Catholic and Apostolic constitution of Christ’s Church from the beginning.”

I suppose that my answer would have to begin, “No, BUT . . .”; however, I shall come back to that after a bit.

The priests of the Society of St. John the Evangelist of Bracebridge, ON—the Cowley Fathers—were noted for their conduct of Parish Missions. Based on his work conducting Missions, Fr. John McCausland put together a book called *The Church’s Answers*. It was published in 1950. In his opening address *To the Reader*, he notes, “The Question Box is a familiar and useful feature in the Mission. Among other things, it has been described as the congregational part in the Mission proceedings. This book contains questions asked in the United States and Canada at Missions conducted by three other Fathers and myself.” He makes the point that “A Missioner does not answer questions with his private opinions, except in those rare cases where a question has not received ample consideration from the Official Authorities and Groups in the Church.”

Fr. McCausland warns the clergy that “Our people do ask questions that are deep and searching” and he counsels that [w]e must be prepared to answer them.”

“To the Flock of Christ, I would say”, he continues, “that the Whole Faith, without addition or subtraction, as received by this Church, is the way of life which will bring eternal salvation. When you are thoroughly steeped in the teaching and Tradition of Christ, received through His Church, you will not flounder around in any old row boat, but will be secure in the Ark.”

This is by way of a lead up to a question to which Fr. McCausland responds, “Does the Anglican Church teach confession to a priest?” He writes:

“Our priests have exactly the same functions as priests in other provinces of the Holy Catholic Church. At Morning and Evening Prayer, the priest declares his authority, in this matter. In the Holy Communion Service, absolution is given.

ALL MAY,

SOME SHOULD,

NONE MUST

*Fr. Robert Mansfield, SSC: “. . . Do We?*

On page 356 [BCP Canada 1922; or pages 581-582 BCP Canada 1962, ed.], of the Canadian Prayer Book, one will discover the form of absolution, used in private confession before a priest. At his ordination, the priest is given authority to administer all the sacraments, except confirmation and ordination. The power of absolution is specially mentioned. This formula (page 635) [BCP 1922; page 655 BCP 1962, ed.] follows all western models. The English canons (laws) of 1604 give special regulations regarding the secrecy of the confessional, and provide penalties for the priest who breaks his silence. Pepys' diary, written in this century, shows us how “normal” going to confession was.

The preface to our ordination section of the Prayer Book reminds us that the Anglican intention is to “continue and *use*” the ancient Orders of bishops, priests and deacons. If a priest can baptise, marry, give Holy Communion, why does anyone think he cannot perform the other function of representing Christ, in forgiving sins. After all, the priest is the human agent of the Holy Spirit, in all the sacraments he administers. The sacrament of Penance is no different. See also, please, Question 63.<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Church has a rule, dating back for centuries, that all should go to confession at least once a year. The Anglican Communion has no rule of this kind, but leaves the matter to everyman's conscience. This simply shifts the responsibility, but does not affect the teaching, or the authority.”

A question unanswered—the elephant in the room, so to speak—would be, I suppose, “why would anyone want to go to confession in the first place?”

Another of the Cowley Fathers of Bracebridge was Fr. Roland F. Palmer, SSJE. Fr. Palmer was an early member of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada until his death in 1985. During the Prayer Book revision in the 1940s and 1950s, Fr. Palmer was a principal member of the Revision Committee. Following the initial acceptance of the new Prayer Book in 1959, he prepared the 1960 Lenten Book for the Church. It is called *His Worthy Praise*. He writes,

The Confession reminds us that the Lord is our Shepherd. We have strayed away by following too much our own desires. All our desires are not wrong, but when we put our will first and God's Will second, we shall very soon be neglecting our duty to God and man and doing wicked things. That is why we get sin-sick. “There is no health in us.” “Health” is the same as “whole-th”. Whole means perfect. Only God is absolutely perfect. Holy—“wholelike”. We confess our sins, and we pray for pardon and restoration to spiritual health. “Restore thou them that are penitent.”

Later in the book when discussing the Confession at the Eucharist, Fr. Palmer contends that “It is a great mistake to think that this Confession can take the place of our private preparation. Of course, each one will in the Confession remember his own particular sins, already confessed and forgiven in his private preparation.” In the 1962 BCP, the words of the Confession at the Eucharist were changed, some phrases being omitted. Fr. Palmer reminds us of the phrases, “Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation

THE PRIEST MAY FIRST SAY:

THE LORD BE IN THY HEART AND ON THY LIPS, THAT THOU MAYEST TRULY CONFESS THY SINS TO ALMIGHTY GOD.

THEN THE PENITENT SHALL SAY:

I CONFESS TO GOD THAT I HAVE SINNED IN THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED, BY MY OWN FAULT. AND ESPECIALLY ... I PRAY TO GOD TO FORGIVE ME ALL MY SINS FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR. AMEN.

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against us.” “The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.” He then continues:

That is all perfectly true, but it is more suitable for use in our private confession beforehand, when we trust that we have had an assurance of pardon, so that the intolerable burden of our sins has been removed.”

Now we hear these words (my emphases):

“If we do NOT have that assurance of pardon in our private preparation, then we are told in the exhortation on page 91, to go to some “discreet Minister of God’s Word” and to open our grief and to receive assurance of forgiveness by the ministry of God’s Word in Absolution. Then there is no need to look back with vain regrets at our sins, but rather, we may look forward, hopefully into the future. Strictly speaking, “the burden of them is intolerable” means not that we cannot put up with our sins, but that we cannot carry away the burden of them. Only Jesus can bear our sins away.

Think about these three phrases for a moment—“look back with vain regret”, “look forward hopefully into the future”, “the burden is intolerable”. Which of them would you like to hold on to? I have no doubt that deep down, everyone wants to be able to look forward full of hope to the future. But how many people actually spend their lives looking back regretfully, all the while continuing to carry intolerable burdens?

A few years ago, I attended a conference on deliverance ministry. In follow up there were several videos on a DVD that I watched. Fr. Pierre LeBlond, OP, a Dominican priest of the RC Archdiocese of Vancouver had attended an earlier conference and spoke in one brief—12 minute talk—of his hearing of confessions afterward. It was a joy to hear him speak. He described how he would hear the confession, placing a crucifix in the hands of the penitent, and saying, “forget about me, just talk to Jesus”. As they spoke to Jesus they would let go of so many things from the past, forgiving others. Fr. LeBlond described the tears flowing from their eyes as they let things go, as they forgave. He said “Sometimes I would hold the crucifix with them. The tears from the eyes would flow through my fingers. I felt I should not wash my fingers after that because they had become sacred...” He spoke too of the freedom the penitents experienced.

Here was a real catharsis, the tears of relief after carrying the unbearable burdens for so long. This gift of tears has been described as a second Baptism.

Catherine Doherty of Madonna House in Combermere, ON spoke of confession. The title of a little book that she wrote sums things up well: *Kiss of Christ: Experiencing the Healing Forgiveness of Jesus through Confession*.

I suspect that many people avoid the idea of auricular confession—the confession spoken to a priest—for various reasons, the most notable being fear or shame.

The Orthodox priest, Fr. Stephen Freeman, speaks frequently on the topic of

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shame in his personal blog and in conferences. A couple of years ago, he wrote, in his blog *Glory to God for all things*, on bearing shame.<sup>3</sup>

He speaks of the late Archimandrite Sophrony of Essex teaching that we must learn to “bear a little shame” and Fr. Stephen also draws attention to the fact that Jesus told us that we are to “take up our Cross and follow me.” Part of the taking up of the Cross is in the preparation. Jesus prepared in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are to be “[l]ooking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)

If we, as mentioned above, want to be able to look hopefully into the future, we need to be able to recognise the joy that is set before us, endure our cross, despising the shame.

Fr. Stephen concludes his blog posting by quoting, “St. John of the Ladder wrote: ‘You cannot escape shame except by shame.’ It is one of the great paradoxes of the faith. A paradox resolved only in the Cross of Christ.”

Now, let’s go back to my early response to the question “As Anglicans we don’t have to go to Confession to a priest, do we?” I supposed that my answer would have to begin, “No, BUT . . .”

Fr. McCausland’s answer to the question concluded, “The Roman Catholic Church has a rule, dating back for centuries, that all should go to confession at least once a year. The Anglican Communion has no rule of this kind, but leaves the matter to everyman’s conscience. This simply shifts the responsibility, but does not affect the teaching, or the authority.” His teaching is that, from an Anglican perspective, private confession to a priest is perfectly legitimate, but the Church does not demand it of you—it’s up to you.

For Anglicans, confession to a priest has been summed up in the adage, “All May, Some Should, None Must.” Since all may and none must, who should?

I said, my answer would have to begin, “No BUT” and it might continue something like this.

If I were feeling off and decided to call the Tele-Health line, the nurse on the line would run down a tick list of questions. She might suggest that I take two aspirin, a glass of water, and get some rest; or, she might suggest that my problem was significant enough that I should get more help by going to see a doctor in the ER right away. A point about the tick list would be that it is not meant to suggest that I have broken a set of rules, it is a diagnostic tool. When I was quite young, it was suggested to me that the Church is a hospital for sinners and that vision of the Church has always stuck with me. This therapeutic allusion seems to fit with the suggestion in the Confession at the Daily Offices that ‘There is no health in us.’

In line with this, tick lists of sins as found in many devotional books can serve

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as diagnostic tools in the spiritual life. *The Practice of Religion* is a devotional book by Archibald Campbell Knowles and reprinted by the TAC’s International Anglican Fellowship. It has a list described as *A Short Form of Self-Examination*. Another is *Saint Augustine’s Prayer Book*. It has several excellent pieces of advice for those beginning the self-examination list. Two of them are:

- Do not fret about your sins.
- Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned, “A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, shalt thou not despise.”

“A BROKEN AND  
CONTRITE HEART,  
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DESPISE.”

Christianity is principally about relationship—my relationship with God, with others, and with myself. If I am angry, anxious, depressed or whatever, these things affect my relationships. If, as Fr. Palmer pointed out, “If we do not have that assurance of pardon in our private preparation, then we are told in the exhortation on page 91, to go to some “discreet Minister of God’s Word” and to open our grief and to receive assurance of forgiveness by the ministry of God’s Word in Absolution. . . .”

I have often been struck by the statement that God loves you just as you are. It is a statement that conveys a profound truth. There is, however, a conclusion to that statement that you need to know and understand, and it is that, while God loves you just as you are, He loves you far too much to leave you like that.

The word “confess” carries the sense of “acknowledging” or even “agreeing with”. Basically we repent—that is turn toward God, and we agree with God that certain things need to change in our lives.

Remember the story of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel?

Fr. Henri Nouwen wrote a wonderful and well-received book entitled *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Meditation on Fathers, Brothers, and Sons*. It is a book in which and through which Fr. Nouwen understands himself as a son, as a brother, and finally, being a priest, as a father. This story began at Jean Vanier’s L’Arche community at Trosly, France where Nouwen was challenged by a poster of Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son*. He describes himself as utterly exhausted “dead tired so much so that I could hardly walk,” he said and continued,

“I was anxious, lonely, restless, and very needy. During the trip [a six week lecturing trip across the USA] I had felt like a strong fighter for justice and peace, able to face the dark world without fear. But after it was all over I felt like a vulnerable child who wanted to crawl onto its mother’s lap and cry. As soon as the cheering or cursing crowds were gone, I experienced a devastating loneliness and could easily have surrendered myself to the seductive voices that promised emotional and physical rest.

It was in this condition that I first encountered Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son* on the door of Simone’s office. My heart leapt when I saw it. After my long

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self-exposing journey, the tender embrace of father and son expressed everything that I desired at that moment. I was, indeed, the son exhausted from long travels; I wanted to be embraced; I was looking for a home where I could feel safe. The son-come-home was all I was and all I wanted to be. For so long I had been going from place to place: confronting, beseeching, admonishing, consoling. Now I desired only to rest safely in a place where I could feel a sense of belonging, a place where I could feel at home.”

I think that there are many people who, if they felt free to do so, would, *mutatis mutandis*, say that is rather how they feel. The Confessional can be a good place to start.

Learn to bear a little shame. Your priest is not there to keep records on you; he is there to help you have to have the opportunity to tear up your own records; so that by the grace of God you can move on at one with yourself because you are one with God.

As Anglicans we don’t have to go to Confession to a priest, do we? No, by the rules, as Anglicans, we don’t have to go to confession unless we truly want the benefit of having done so. There is a reason why the form of private confession is included in the Ministry to the Sick in our Prayer Book (page 581 BCP Canada 1962). It is a sacrament of healing.

In closing, there are three verses from the Scriptures that I should like to share with you. They are used at the beginning of the form for the Visiting of a Sick Person.

The first describes something that, no doubt, we, like Fr. Nouwen, all desire. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” *Deuteronomy 33.27*

The second speaks to those who recognise their need and are willing to wait upon God and trust Him to work in their lives. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” *Isaiah 40.31*.

The last speaks to the one who is willing to set aside his anxiety and ask God for something—in this case the Absolution and remission of their sins. These are verses allusion to which we hear every time we offer the Eucharist. “In nothing be anxious: but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 4. 6,7*



Notes

1. This article can be found at <https://traditionalanglican.ca/news/newsletters/2014-02-TAN.pdf>.
2. Question 63 deals with Article 27 of the Articles of Religion, regarding Baptism and make the point that repentance and confession of sin is intimately related to Baptism. Fr. McCausland notes, “Confession became a sacrament that could be used for sins after baptism, as often as needed.”
3. <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2016/03/15/justice-forgiveness-bearing-little-shame/>



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**TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA**

TACC Office  
136 William St.  
Parry Sound, ON  
P2A 1W2

Phone: 705-746-7378  
E-mail:  
vicargeneral@traditionalanglican.ca  
&  
We're on the web at  
**TRADITIONALANGLICAN.CA**



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GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

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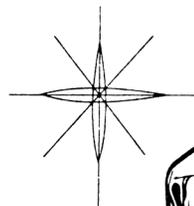
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*Fr. Robert's Remarks*

brate the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Till next month, God Bless!



*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

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Contact Info:

**Fr. David Marriott**

*drm274@hotmail.com*

409-15210 Guildford Dr.

Surrey BC V3R 0X7