



Faithful Centurion Anglican Orthodox Church

Pentecost

commonly known as

Whitsunday

Sunday Report



Today was Whitsunday, also known as Pentecost. We were slightly cooler than usual for this time of year. Sunrise temperature on Mount Olympus was 36°F, by the time church ended the mercury had climbed to 79°F, all under bright blue and clear skies. We ended up with 3 people present for the service.

Gathering Song

Jack Arnold played *Amazing Grace* for the gathering song.

Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come

'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand
years,

Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

We try to pick our gathering songs to have a wonderful message, be easy to sing and suitable for guitar accompaniment. *Amazing Grace* seems to be the parish favorite.

Pentecost which is commonly called Whitsunday and the time of Whitsuntide



The octave (8 days) following Whitsunday. In the Book of Common Prayer, the Monday and Tuesday after Whitsunday are Red Letter days, so called because days provided with a proper Collect (prayer), Epistle, and Gospel were marked in the calendar in red ink. "Whitsuntide" (formerly also spelled "Whitsontide") or "Whitsun Week" is derived from Middle English *whitsunday*, from Old English *hwita sunnandæg*, "White Sunday", in reference to the white ceremonial robes formally worn on this day.



Whitsunday marks the Feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the 50th day after Easter. It ranks, after Easter, as the second festival of the Church. In the West, the Vigil of Pentecost soon became a secondary date for baptisms, with a ceremony resembling the Paschal Vigil Service. (Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which falls on the 50th day after Passover.) As the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles on this day (Acts 2: 1), the name was applied to the Christian feast celebrating this event, popularly called "Whitsunday".

Memorial Day

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, a day set aside to remember those members of our Armed Forces who made the ultimate sacrifice, without whose sacrifice we would not be free.



*Memorial Days*¹.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, in whose hands are the living and the dead; We give thee thanks for all those thy servants who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. Grant to them thy mercy and the light of thy presence, that the good work which thou hast begun in them may be perfected; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord.
Amen.

Our country is free today because when our freedom has been threatened by those who would overturn our way of life, patriots stepped forward to take action against our

¹ From the *Book of Common Prayer* page 42

country's foes. They put their lives on the line that we might be free. Tomorrow on Memorial Day, we remember those whose lives were given, whose families paid the price for our freedom today. They did not give their lives for anything but freedom. If you ascribe their motives to other motives, you do so at your own peril.

Hundreds of thousands have given their future for ours. Charge your glass, raise it high. Drink to them. Give thanks to God for their patriotism and steadfast courage.

Propers

Each Sunday there are Propers: special prayers and readings from the Bible. There is a Collect for the Day; that is a single thought prayer, most written either before the re-founding of the Church of England in the 1540s or written by Bishop Thomas Cranmer, the first Archbishop of Canterbury after the re-founding.

The Collect for the Day is to be read on Sunday and during Morning and Evening Prayer until the next Sunday. The Epistle is normally a reading from one of the various Epistles, or letters, in the New Testament. The Gospel is a reading from one of the Holy Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Collect is said by the minister as a prayer, the Epistle can be read by either a designated reader (as we do in our church) or by one of the ministers and the Holy Gospel, which during the service in our church is read by an ordained minister or our Deacon Striker.

The propers are the same each year, except if a Red Letter Feast, that is one with propers in the prayerbook, falls on a Sunday, then those propers are to be read instead, except in a White Season, where it is put off. Red Letter Feasts, so called because in the Altar Prayerbooks the titles are in red, are special days. Most of the Red Letter Feasts are dedicated to early saints instrumental in the development of the church, others to special events. Some days are particularly special and the Collect for that day is to be used for an octave (eight days) or an entire season, like Advent or Lent.

The Propers for today are found on Page 180-181, with the Collect first:

Pentecost, commonly called Whitsunday.

The Collect.

O GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ **This Collect is to be said daily throughout Whitsun Week.**

Dru Arnold read this morning's Epistle, which written in the Second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles beginning at the First Verse, which consisted primarily of a listing of all the countries and regions surrounding Jerusalem, or at least the hardest to pronounce ones, and a description of the actions of the Apostles when the Holy Ghost came upon them. But, you will also notice that the coming of the Holy Ghost demonstrated the universality of The Word, for when they spoke in tongues, The Word spoke to each in their own language. The Word was not some stranger's language, but their very own!



WHEN the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

Deacon Striker Jack Arnold read today's Gospel which was written in the Fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John beginning at the Fifteenth Verse:

JESUS said unto his disciples, If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot,



Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.

Sermon – Time and Action - The Third God Guy

Today's sermon brought the Collect, Epistle and Gospel together and is partly contained in the forewords above.



Consider these words from the Collect:

... sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort ...

When Jesus left on Ascension Day, we lost a teacher here on earth. We still have Him as Redeemer and Savior, but what to do for understanding? In response to His departure, God sent us the Holy Ghost.

Who is this Holy Ghost?

We worship the One True God, a triune God, that is Three in One; Father, Son and Holy

Ghost. Most people have no trouble understanding the concept of God the Father, Christians seem to get God the Son, but many seem to have a bit of difficulty with the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost has been there since the beginning, He breathed life into the world, yet His actions seemed to be sporadic until Pentecost.

Well, today is Pentecost, the time one normally thinks of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, the Comforter. When people do think of Him, they oft think of the actions described in the words of Saint Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The dancing and speaking in tongues. All that happened so we might understand that with the help of the Holy Ghost we might bring the Word to all mankind. The Word of God is a universal language. When the disciples spoke in tongues, the people around them heard the Word in their own language, not an odd combination of sounds that no one understood. The disciples spoke and were heard by those around them in their own language, not Klingon. It is not for us to speak in tongues without study; that was a one shot deal. It was designed to show us that we could, with hard work and persistence bring the Gospel to the world in the language of the people.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that He would be leaving, but the Father would send a facilitator; one who whose presence, if we let Him into our hearts, would let us understand His Word with those self same hearts. The Comforter would bring the Love of God into our hearts to let us feel His Love. He will help us understand that we are striving to be one with God, with Jesus and with the Holy Ghost. Our love can be demonstrated by our actions. For if we love Jesus, we will do as He asked.

If you think about it, you will recall that the second half of the Book of Luke is titled The Acts of the Apostles. It is not the thoughts, the beliefs, the feelings, the meditations, the inner feelings or any other touchy feely, it is the ACTS. If you believe, act on those beliefs.

We need the help of the Holy Ghost to learn what we are to do, how we are to do it and most of all to do it. Action, not just diction.

Bishop Ogles' Sermon

We are off fortunate to get copies of Bishop Jerry's sermon notes. Today is one of those Sundays. Today's sermon starts off with the collect. It will give you a lot to consider in your heart.

Sermon Whitsunday 27 May 2012 Anno Domini

*19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, **I that speak unto thee am he.** (John 4:19-26)***



Pentecost, commonly called Whitsunday.

The Collect.

O GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout Whitsun Week.

We have hitherto observed the Church Season from Advent to Whitsunday (today) of the present year. The entire church year is like the budding of a beautiful rose in revealing the completed works of Christ for us.

In today's text, Jesus had begun his ministry on Jordan Banks at His baptism, performed His first Miracle at a Wedding Feast at Cana of Galilee, and then determines that "*He must needs go through Samaria.*" This is more than a quaint phrase from Shakespearean English. Why did Jesus NEED to go through Samaria when this would have been a diversion to the normal course of travel to Galilee? Perhaps we might posit that question much earlier: why did Jesus find it necessary to come to Bethlehem as a babe, or to be baptized like unto us, or to do so many marvelous works and wonders among us, or to readily go to the cross and die in our stead? The answer, of course, is that He must satisfy the foreordained purpose and grace of God the Father in saving us.....and, as well, a poor and sinful woman at Jacob's Well, and at an insignificant city in Samaria. Christ must needs go through Samaria because He knew of a woman whose heart was pierced with many wounds that sin had caused in that heart. And He came

not only for that particular woman, but all of the other men and women of Samaria who would be drawn to Him through the testimony of that woman whom no one would have believed prior to her coming to know Christ. Is this not marvelous to know - that He came, two thousand years ago, to a manger in Bethlehem to save multitudes of that land, but also you and me in particular!

Christ had a rendezvous with an unsuspecting woman whom He had watched many times, through the eyes of the Holy Ghost, come to draw water at an inopportune time of noon to the Well. She thirsted for water, but she knew not that Water which would satisfy not only her thirst but her soul. She brings an empty bucket to be filled, but she also brings an empty heart that needed filling more.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is foremost a gentleman. The Spanish say: "Jesus es el Senor" He will not impolitely impose upon our hearts without a proper opening. The Lord insightfully engages the woman with a marvelous exchange of wisdom and insight into her character and present circumstance. Doesn't He engage us in the same manner? Have we ever gone through the usual exercise of the day when, suddenly, we meet someone, or have an experience, that is totally unplanned but which changes our whole day? The woman got out of bed as usual that day. She avoided the women of the city and their gossip by going to the Well at the unusual hour of greatest heat – Noon. But there she met someone whom she considered to be a Stranger. Perhaps He had been to her, but she had been no stranger to Him for He knew of every secret of her heart. He knows the secrets of our hearts as well and nothing is hidden from His understanding.

As the two discuss the matter of water, the poor woman's heart is focused on water that lies fifty feet or so beneath the surface in the bottom of a Well; but Christ makes reference to that Water which comes down from Heaven – the Water of Life which He freely offers. An empty heart can hold much of this Water once it opens to the Giver. Our hearts are also made to be receptacles of that Water of Life if we open them to the Giver.

The woman claims not to have a husband, and Jesus confirms that she does not have, for the five she has had before are not her husbands, and the one with whom she lives now is not her husband. The woman is mystified by this Stranger whom she can not deceive. He knows too much of her to be one of those kinds of men she has known in her past. That is one of the characteristics of Jesus – He mystifies us with His grace, His love, and His Wisdom towards us.

The woman recognizes that none other than a great prophet could utter such words of understanding. Her sin-dimmed mind is beginning to receive a small and glowing light that leads to an even greater suspicion of who this Figure might be. She says that *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* Now her mind is turned from earthly water to that which Christ offers. She is curious to know more.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Has that hour yet come for the moslem-

infested land of Samaria? Truly it has. We, too, can know what and Whom we worship for Christ has taken upon His perfect Person the flesh of men such as we are. Being sinless, He suffered every pain and temptation that we are heir to. There is not longer any geographic limitation to the worship of God; however, we must worship in Spirit and, at the same time, in Truth. If we have great spirit, but depart from truth, we are not worshipping the True God. If we worship rigidly in Truth but lack the attendant Spirit of Love, we are amiss in our worship. Truth and Spirit combine to the glory of God in worship.

So the lesson of today's Gospel text reminds us of the fullness of the ministry and Person of Christ. He came in the flesh to minister to us and to be Light unto our path. He died for us sealing the redemption promised to Abraham and his Seed. He was, in fact, that Promised Seed. He rose on the Third Day, according to the Scriptures, and then what? He ascended into Heaven where He sits on the right hand of God to be our constant Advocate and Intercessor. Having physically departed, Christ promised not to leave us comfortless (Greek meaning: orphaned). He must send the Spirit to be our Comforter and Guide in leading us into an understanding of all the truth of Christ revealed in Scripture. A Spirit is not limited in physical properties. The Holy Spirit has the nature to be in a billion hearts at once and leading all in the particular way the Spirit determines. Christ went away in bodily form and sent the Spirit to be a comfort to all of God's people regardless the distance and time that separates them from one another. This is the Glory of Pentecost and Whitsunday! Do you have that Water of Life poured out in your heart by that Holy Spirit of God in Christ today?

Bishop Dennis Campbell's Sunday Sermon

As is oft the case, we are honored to present Bishop Dennis' Sunday sermon presented to his parish. Dennis has a special sermon for the Sunday after Ascension Day:



God Our Comfort

Psalm 68, Acts 2:1-11, John 14:15-21

Whitsuntide

May 27, 2012

The message of Whitsunday, or, Pentecost, is God our comforter. The idea of a comforter brings several images to mind. We can think of the sense of comfort the people of ancient Israel felt knowing that the hills surrounding their city made them secure from attack. We can think of the sense of security of a small child embraced in his mother's arms and knowing his father stands, strong and ready to protect him from harm. We can think of the comfort we find in the love of people who love us. We can think of the comfort we find in the love and power of our Saviour, the Good Shepherd, of whom David said, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." All of these invoke feelings of comfort and security, and remind us that God is our comfort in a way no human person or institution can ever be.

Let's think together about two ways in which God is our comfort. First, He is our comfort in the work of Christ who gave Himself on the cross, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There once was a barrier, called, sin, that kept us from God. Christ bore our sin in His own flesh, and when His body died on the cross, our sin died with Him. So that barrier is gone. We have free access to God through Christ. And Christ Himself spoke comforting words (we call them

"comfortable words" in Holy Communion), saying "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest [comfort] unto your souls." Second, He is our comfort as He dwells in our souls through the Holy Spirit. If you are in Christ, that is, if you truly believe in Christ as He is revealed in Scripture, God lives in you. He makes His home in you, and He brings you into Himself to enable you to live in Him. The great God of eternity, almighty, all wise, all good, all sustaining, lives in you, makes His dwelling, His home, in your being. I have no words to adequately describe such a thing. Every word in every language I know is trite and empty and powerless to express the meaning of this reality. It has to be embraced on a level that is beyond words. Please embrace it.

The Collect for the day is a prayer of thanksgiving for the Gift of the Holy Spirit. God "didst teach" and make us rejoice in the comfort of the Spirit, "through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour," we pray in the Collect. The word, "comfort" comes from today's Gospel reading. In John 14:16 our Lord says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." If you look a little further down the page of your Bible you will read in John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless." I am going to make a very profound statement here, so please listen intently. Comfort is the opposite of comfortless. There, aren't you glad you have me to explain these intricate theological complexities? But I didn't say that just for a joke. To be comfortless in this world is to dwell in spiritual darkness and despair so deep and heavy it crushes the life out of your soul. Darkness, in this sense means to have no knowledge of ultimate reality, and it means to have no hope of ever gaining such knowledge. It means to have no way of knowing truth or goodness or right morality. It also means to have no way of knowing God, or even if there is a God or not, or whether you're going to Heaven or hell or nothingness. This kind of spiritual darkness is the underlying cause of the despair and angst that grips our world today. Dwelling in darkness, people cannot know whether God exists or not, or what constitutes good choices that contribute to happiness and meaning in life, or if anything "matters" or not. They don't know anything, except that they will die one day, and death scares them because there might be a God and there might be a hell.

Comfortless means to be in spiritual despair because you are left with nothing but your own opinions and experiences upon which to make decisions that will decide your destiny today and forever. Comfortless means to live in the knowledge that any or all of your decisions can be wrong, and probably will be, and there is nothing you can do about it. There is no comfort in this kind of darkness, only an ever widening and deepening whirlpool of despair that will eventually drown you no matter how hard you swim, no matter how good a swimmer you are. Even believing that all people are in the same condition is no comfort. I know people who say they know they're going to hell, but at least they won't be alone. There is no comfort in that. It is only despair multiplied by billions of souls.

But Jesus said He would send the Comforter, and Pentecost is the annual celebration of the arrival of the Comforter of God, the Holy Spirit. The Comforter dispels the darkness and despair I just spoke about. He replaces them with knowledge for He is the Spirit of Truth. He teaches us the things of God. He reveals the truth to us. He gives to us the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God is life to our minds and souls forever. He dispels our despair by giving the sure and certain hope of our resurrection unto life eternal in the Paradise of God. He enables us to believe. I think this is probably the single, most important work of the Holy Spirit; He makes sense of life for us, He makes

sense of God for us, He makes sense of the Bible for us, and then He enables us to believe what He has taught us, so we may receive the gift of eternal life by faith.

Then, the Holy Spirit, comforts us by enabling us to abide in the faith forever. He keeps our faith alive. That doesn't mean it will always be a bright and shining bonfire. Sometimes, I know, it will only be a smoldering ember, barely hanging on. But it will hang on. Isaiah 42:3 says of God, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." There will be times when the trials of the world, the flesh, and the devil will make your faith feel like a smoking flax; like the barely glowing edge of the candle wick after the flame has been extinguished. He won't let it stop glowing. He will keep it alive. He will not quench it Himself, and He will not allow anything else to quench it. He will bring us into that place of unimaginable joy, and we shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever. That is comfort to the soul.

I must make one more important point before I end this sermon. The arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago marks the beginning of the New Age; not as it is defined by a current fad, but as it is defined in the Bible. It marks the beginning of the end time and the last days; not as they are defined by current pop theology, but as the Bible refers them, as the final era and the last kind of day before God brings this present creation to an end and ushers in the Kingdom of God in complete fullness. It is the character, not the number, of the days that make these the last days. It is the character, not the place on the calendar, that makes our era the end time. You will save yourself much needless grief and prevent yourself from being fooled by those who say they have the return of Christ all figured out if you will simply learn and remember this; the end times are the era in which the promises of God in the Old and New Testament begin to come into fulfillment. The last days are the days when the plan of God for His creation begins to become reality. The Lord is gathering His elect and bringing them into His Kingdom, which is the Church. He is forgiving their sins and making them right with God and with each other. In the fullness of time He will end creation as we know it, and will restore it to its original goodness, populated by people who know, love and obey Him. The details of this plan are hidden in the mind of God, but the knowledge that it is happening is comfort to His people.

So God is our comfort in ways nothing else can be. And His comfort is primarily the comfort of the soul of those who "truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel" which is the promises of God" declared unto mankind In Jesus Christ our Lord." One of those promises is that He Himself will draw us into Himself and dwell within His people by His Holy Spirit.

"O God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

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+Dennis Campbell

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Guest Sermon from Bishop George W. Conner

George Conner is the Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Episcopal Church. He graciously provided a copy of his sermon notes for Whitsunday. I think you will find his sermon different than those usually published here, quite enjoyable and quite instructive. I am confident you will enjoy it.



Quo Vadis - A Sermon for Whitsunday, 27 May 2012

Today's Epistle lesson, Acts 2: 1-11 relates events on the day of Pentecost, variously calculated to have occurred sometime in the years 29 to 33. Often Pentecost, or Whitsunday, is called the "birth of the Christian Church" since it provided the reassurance of our Lord to His Apostles and early followers. that He, through the actions of the Holy Ghost, would be with them always. I want to skip some years afterwards, to the reign of the Emperor Nero (64-68 AD), and the persecutions of the early Christians in the Roman Empire, including the traditional martyrdoms of Saints Peter and Paul.

Persecution of the early church occurred sporadically almost from the beginning, but the government under Nero first sanctioned it. In 64 AD, a great fire ravaged Rome. Nero took the opportunity provided by the destruction to rebuild the city in the Greek style and begin building a large palace for himself. People began speculating that Nero had set the fire himself in order to indulge his aesthetic tastes in the reconstruction so, according to historians, the eccentric emperor placed the blame on the Christians for the fire in an effort to divert attention from himself. Nero was quite insane, and is reported to have tortured Christians with great cruelties for his own enjoyment. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote:

"Besides being put to death they [the Christians] were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even toward men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to satisfy the cruelties of an individual."

Despite these extreme brutalities, Nero's persecution was local and short-lived. However, it was the first official persecution and marked the first time the government distinguished Christians from Jews. After Nero, it became a capital crime to be a Christian, although pardon was always available if one publicly condemned Christ and sacrificed to the gods.

Quo Vadis is a 1951 epic film made by MGM in Technicolor. adapted from Henryk Sienkiewicz's classic 1896 novel of the same name. Thanks to this year's Lenten and Easter programming by Turner Classic Movies, I was able to view *Quo Vadis* again and

record it. It also is available in DVD format from a number of sources. I commend it to you.

Quo vadis? is a Latin phrase meaning "Where are you going?" or "Whither goest thou?" The title refers to an incident reported in the apocryphal Acts of Peter. Peter was fleeing from likely crucifixion in Rome at the hands of the government. Along the road outside the city he met a risen Jesus. Peter asked Jesus "*Quo vadis?*", to which our Lord replied, "*I am going to Rome to be crucified again*". Peter thereby gained the courage to continue his ministry and returned to the city, eventually to be martyred.

The phrase also occurs a few times in the Vulgate translation of the Bible, notably in John 13:36, when Peter asks Jesus the same question, to which our Lord responds, "*Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*"

When I was in the tenth grade, the film Quo Vadis came to my hometown of Jackson, Mississippi. It played at the Lamar Theater, only two blocks from Central High School. My friends and I all went to see it. The film didn't disappoint.

The action takes place in ancient Rome from AD 64–68, a period after Emperor Claudius' illustrious and powerful reign, during which the new corrupt and destructive Emperor Nero ascends to power and eventually threatens to destroy Rome's previous peaceful order. The main subject of the film is the conflict between Christianity and the corruption of the Roman Empire. The characters and events depicted in the film are a mixture of actual historical figures and situations and fictionalized ones.

The film tells the story of a Roman military commander, Marcus Vinicius (played by Robert Taylor), returning from the wars, who falls in love with a devout Christian, Lygia (played by Deborah Kerr). Marcus slowly becomes intrigued by her religion. Their love story is told against the broader historical background of early Christianity and its persecution by Nero, played by Peter Ustinov. Nero's atrocities become increasingly more outrageous and his acts more insane. When he burns Rome and blames the Christians, Marcus goes off to save Lygia and her family. Nero captures them and all the Christians, and condemns them to be killed in the arena.

Marcus is arrested for trying to save Lygia. In prison, Peter (played by Finlay Currie), who has also been arrested after returning to Rome upon a sign of the Lord, marries the couple. Eventually, Peter is crucified upside-down.

Nero's wife, who lusts after Marcus, devises a diabolical revenge for his rejection of her. Lygia is tied to a wooden stake in the arena. A wild bull is also placed there, and Lygia's bodyguard giant, Ursus (played by Buddy Baer) must try to kill it with his bare hands, otherwise Lygia will be gored to death. Marcus is tied to the spectator's box and forced to watch, much to the horror of his officers, who also attend the spectacle. When all seems hopeless, Ursus is able to break the bull's neck. Hugely impressed by Ursus' courage, the crowd exhorts Nero to spare them, which the emperor is not willing to do. However, Nero's four other advisors vouch for the mob's demands by putting their thumbs up as well. Marcus then breaks free of his bonds, leaps into the arena, freeing Lygia with the help of the loyal troops from his legion, and announces that General Galba is at that moment marching on Rome, intent on replacing Nero. The crowd, now firmly believing that Nero, and not the Christians, is responsible for the burning of Rome, revolts. Nero flees to his palace, where he strangles his wife to death, blaming her for attempting to scapegoat the Christians. Then, a palace slave who was once in

unrequited love with Nero aids him to kill himself before the mob catches him.

Marcus, Lygia and Ursus are now free, and leave Rome. By the roadside, Peter's shepherd's crook, which he had left behind when he returned to Rome, has miraculously sprouted flowers. As the film ends, the radiant light intones, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*"

I was particularly impressed with the music score for the movie, composed by Miklos Rosza. I wrote to Mr. Rosza to ask whether or not the score might be available for purchase. He actually replied to my inquiry, a very pleasant letter, but answering in the negative. I was able, not long afterwards, to find the music as a piano transcription at a music store. I promptly gave it to our organist at Galloway Methodist Church in Jackson which I attended as a child and teenager. She played several of the selections from this music during services for a number of years afterwards.

Here are some take-home lessons: the Christian Church has been under persecution for most of its history. Today we regularly see rampant persecutions in Africa, Asia, and throughout much of the rest of the world, mostly by militant Islam, but also by other non-Christian religions and secularists. The Church also is under persecution in this country by the ACLU, by militant atheists, by Marxists, by Muslims, and even by the policies of our own federal government.

American Christians aren't now being killed in arenas, but open warfare has been declared against Christian beliefs and practices by the current national administration. Long-established moral doctrines and dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and its institutions have been assaulted. In so doing, the administration attacks orthodox Christians of all denominations, including our own. It assails Christian belief in the sanctity of marriage and the family. It attacks human life itself, at its beginning and through its end, by support of the abortion of the unborn, infanticide of the newborn, and by promoting policies that can only be described as euthanasia. Such policies establish "health guidelines" which discriminate against the elderly, the handicapped, the chronically ill, and those who are considered to be unworthy of life because of their perceived mental inferiority. These policies will surely intensify in coming years.

I believe that we, as Christians, must "wake up and smell the skunk cabbage". I believe that we are obligated to protest, by our deeds and by our giving, those policies of our so-called "leaders" that dehumanize the life given to us by our Creator. Each one of us must recognize that godly action is required. Said actions won't necessarily be identical, but in aggregate, they should and must be to the glory of God the Father and His Son, our Lord.

On this Whitsunday, let us give thanks for those Christian groups that promote freedom of religion, the sanctity of human life, and the preservation of the God-established family. Let us pray for the strength and wisdom to do what we must to return our nation to righteousness. And let us support those groups such as Barnabas Aid, which minister to the persecuted Christian Church throughout the world.

Let's go back to the original question asked of our Lord by St. Peter: *Quo Vadis?* Whither goest Thou? Today the question may well be asked of each of us by our Lord: Where are WE going?

LET US PRAY:

A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.
To serve the present age, My calling to fulfill:
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will!
Arm me with jealous care, As in Thy sight to live;
And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!
Help me to watch and pray,
And on Thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall for ever die.

New Nametags

We had no new nametags today.

After Church Hospitality

Sadly, no after church snacks. With no fatted dog nut in sight, we set straight off to work after church. Fatted dog nuts next week!

After church goodies providers as currently signed up:

Date	Name
3 June 2012	Opportunity Available – Trinity Sunday
10 June 2012	Opportunity Available – First Sunday after Trinity
17 June 2012	Opportunity Available – Second Sunday after Trinity
24 June 2012	Opportunity Available – Third Sunday after Trinity
1 July 2012	Opportunity Available – Fourth Sunday after Trinity

People in our Prayers - <http://faithfulcenturionprayerteam.blogspot.com/>

Why? Prayer is an extremely important activity.

It is not that God knows not our needs, for He surely does. Yet, Jesus commanded us to ask God for those same needs. In addition to the obvious of asking God for help, offering thanksgiving and the like, prayer helps us focus our thoughts on how we might do God's work.

The Prayer Team of the Church of the Faithful Centurion was established to help our members and fellow Christians pray for those in need and to give thanks as well for the blessings we have been granted.

Who can be on the list? Do I have to be a member of the Church of the Faithful Centurion to be prayed for?

No! The only qualification to be on the list is that you want our prayer team to pray for you. We are Christians and are happy to pray for you, no matter who you are. If you want help from God, you are our kind of people.

What is the commitment from the prayer team?

Each member of the team will pray for the desired outcome at last once per day.

How do I get myself or someone else on the prayer list?

You can email one of the prayer team leaders: Jack - jack@faithfulcenturion.org or Dru -

dru@faithfulcenturion.org, or call the church office at (619) 659-3608 or fill out a prayer card at church.

What should I ask for?

Depends on what you want. Some people merely want God to be asked to heal their ills and be mentioned by their first name, others want a specific outcome and / or have more of their personal information known to the team. Ask for what you want. It is your desire and need for prayer the team is attempting to meet. For typical examples, see the list below.

Updating the Team

If you are on our prayer list, or if you have submitted a person that you have asked us to pray for, please update one of the team members or Hap in person, by telephone or email. It helps to be able to pray specifically for these individuals including their specific needs; plus if they get better, it is nice to give thanks!

Please note that on the yellow (maybe green or orange if you get an old one) cards at church, you can ask that those to be prayed for have their names disseminated to the prayer team. Those names will be said in church and appear here. Or, you can ask that their names and purpose be kept confidential, then only Hap will know to pray for them.

Prayer List Notice – If you have someone on the prayer list and their needs have changed, please let us know. We'd like to update our prayers to reflect the need and most important to give thanks!

Travel

Mona Mukerji traveled from England to Pakistan recently, in order to commemorate the opening of a church she and her extended family had built in the town of Stunzabad, Pakistan, a very volatile area. Also, Mona's brother was a very, very renowned priest or bishop, in Lahore until he passed away. This family is heavily involved in uplifting Christians in Pakistan; as we know, they have their work cut out for them. God bless them and keep them safe.

Move

Ryan Hopkins has moved to Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, to study Dressage Riding through June 2013. Please pray for God's guidance in his life as he works and studies.

The Thomas Family is on a short tour assignment in Guam for the next 15 months. Please pray for the assignment to continue to go well for Kurt and for Mary and the kids to make new friends. In particular pray that Kristyna and Mitchell will develop good friends and school mates there so as to further their development as both Christians and citizens. Things seem to be going well where the sun rises on the United States, so keep praying! Give thanks and ask for continued good developments.

Birthday

Laurel Bessesen celebrated her 89th birthday on 26 April 2012.

Homebound or Infirm

Sara's mother is in a state of deteriorating health, both physically and mentally. On 30 January 2012, she broke her hip and had a partial hip replacement. She is not doing well. Please pray for peace of mind for her and the ability for both Sara and her mother to put their cares and worries on God's shoulders so they can deal with the many problems involved.

Departed

Arthur Gregr, father of Brett Gregr, passed away on 16 March 2012. Please give thanks for his life here and pray for peace of mind and trust in God for his family who remain behind, in particular his son Brett.

Jackson Babcock, father of Hope DeLong, passed away on 14 March 2012. Please give thanks for his life here and pray for peace of mind and trust in God for his family who remain behind, in particular his daughters Lisa, Faith and Hope.

Nearing the end of their time here on earth

Alice Berry has cancer which has now spread past her vocal cords and into her brain. She is grateful to be with her husband Larry in her own home. Her time on earth is limited. Please pray for a peaceful transition from this world to home for Alice; that she, Larry and their family can keep their trust in the Lord and not worry, pray the transition will be smooth.

In need of a miracle or understanding of God's Plan

Todd and *Kenny* have both been fighting osteocarcinoma for over five years and have been told their time here on earth is nearing its end, absent a miracle from God. Both are ready to go home and leave the pain, but would like to stay. Please pray for them and their families.

Healing

Sylvia Lee, Sandra Lee's mother, has progressive lumbar stenosis and sciatica, which is causing increasing pain in her back and weakness in her legs. Sylvia has already had mobility issues because of the strokes she had almost 20 years ago. She uses a wheelchair and walker as it is. Various pain pills and injections have not helped, so now it is time for a consultation with a surgeon. If this continues and Sylvia gets to the point where she can't walk or even stand, they will have to face moving out of the house they've lived in for 45 years. Please pray for strength, healing and easing of pain for Sylvia and her family's continued faith and in God as the Great Physician. They pray for help to listen to God's voice and guidance through this journey together.

Sara Simmons sustained a fractured right knee as the result of a fall on a slate patio. She is now in a leg brace, but is still challenged for mobility. Please pray for patience for Sara and her husband Bill, as well as rapid and complete healing.

Kay Denton (Mrs. Kay) got a blood clot, which affected two of her fingers. She underwent an angiogram which seemingly had the desired result and the Eveready Bunny rebounded once again. Please pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the positive outcome and pray for continued peace of mind for Mrs. Kay and her family. Give thanks for her trust in the Lord and her positive attitude

Izaiah Urista (4) has a brain tumor. He was playing with his older sister, Jade, at McDonald's when she noticed he wasn't using his right side to climb, etc. Jade took her brother to their mother after which they realized he couldn't lift his arm. They took him to the hospital where it was discovered he has a brain tumor. He will undergo about 18 months of chemo to see if the tumor will shrink. At this point they do not think they can do anything else for him. Please pray for strength and guidance for Izaiah and his entire family, as well as provide guidance for medical treatment team.

James L. Cavanah had surgery the afternoon of 10 February 2012, to remove two small

but cancerous tumors. James is a minister with the AOC in Savannah, Georgia. Please pray for his recovery and remission from the cancer. Give thanks for the surgery and pray for both him and his family to allow God to carry their worries while he recovers.

Bill Aitken had a third abdominal surgery on 22 November 2011. This time the tumor was removed. Bill is having difficulty keeping the doctor's instructions, please pray for help for him to do so. Please pray that Bill might live a long and healthy life to the honor and glory of God. Pray also for peace of mind for Bill and his wife Sara.

Gil Garcia is back in the VA hospital trying to get a grip on his skin. Give him a call at (909) 499-3665. Please pray for peace of mind for Gil and his wife Mary.

Dotty Valkenaar had successful surgery for a shoulder ligament problem on 28 February 2012. Physical therapy seems to be working, but is painful. Please pray for continued recovery and peace of mind through trust in God for Dotty and Lew, her husband, as well as their entire family.

Morris Martin, 91, has had multiple bouts of pneumonia and lost his ability to swallow; he is still trying to regain his ability to swallow. Morris was back in the hospital over Easter as the result of an inadvertent aspiration. He is back in the nursing home and gaining strength. He has a great attitude and trust in God. Pray for continued gain of strength and peace of mind for Morris and his family, in particular his son Paul. Pray for his trust in our Lord and for both him and his family to let God carry their worries while he recovers.

Steve Sundberg had a heart attack after Easter. After some time, the medical team treating him decided he was not a candidate for stents and a five-way heart bypass was performed the week of 6 June 2011. Please pray for his complete recovery and for his three children and family who are very worried about him, pray also for his trust in our Lord and for both him and his family to let God carry their worries while he recovers.

Matt Alcantara, age 15, has Osteosarcoma (bone cancer), a very rare and often lethal form of cancer with limited treatment options. This is a disease that is about 90 percent fatal in a couple of years. He has no hip joint on one side, but he walks and swims! Courage? Guts? You bet! Matt just came back from his what is now every four month bone scan – CLEAN! Thanks be to God for the way things have gone. Thanks also for the great faith of Matt and his entire family. Their faith and trust is a wonderful example for each and every one of us. But, now is not the time to stop praying. Actually, it never is the time to stop praying!

Judith Clingwall, is afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She is currently in Laurel Place, an extended care facility in Surrey, British Columbia. Judith's condition has worsened recently. She is no longer able to stand, in fact she has a lot of trouble sitting upright. Judith is depressed and wants to go home to watch her birds, which given everything seems unlikely at present. Please pray for her to take an active part in her own life, for her strength, peace of mind, trust in God and remission of the disease so she might return home to her family. Pray also for strength for her husband Martin as he deals with all the problems and stress of Judith's situation.

Becky Madden is paralyzed from the neck down as the result of a tragic shooting accident. Her husband is doing his best to take care of her; it is hard and he is learning the best he can. Please pray for further recovery for Becky, as well as strength and guidance for her husband.

Betty Macauley, Tim's mom, fell and cracked her hip. The surgeons were able to put a pin in the hip. She made it home after a week of rehabilitation, which is a good sign. She is now walking with the aid of a walker around the house and wheelchair when out side of house. Tim says she is tough and hanging in there, considering she will be 92 in June. Tim will be heading up to see her for a few days in April. Please pray for her rapid recovery and for a good attitude and most important for trust in God to keep her moving while she is here.

Lauralee underwent a lumpectomy on Friday after Thanksgiving. A further anomaly has been discovered and she had additional preventative radiation treatment. Please pray for a complete remission of the cancer. Pray also Lauralee will maintain her great attitude and trust in God.

Luca, 5 years old, from our church family in Perth, Western Australia, who has just been diagnosed with leukemia. And for his Mum and Dad and extended family.

Vince (age 15), reoccurrence of Osteosarcoma, recent testing found a nickel sized tumor in his lungs. The doctors are consulting with a specialist in Houston. Please pray for guidance for the medical team and for peace of mind for Vince and his family.

Obra Gray continues to take day by day. Please continue to keep Obra in your prayers, and give him the strength of knowing the Lord is with him and will never forsake him. Obra needs security of what lies ahead of him, and only the Lord can grant the solace to answer his prayer.

Guidance

Sara asks that you pray for guidance for her as she deals with the stresses of her family and life. Pray that she can separate those things which she can affect from those things which she cannot and give her grace to accept that she cannot do everything and can only change those things within her control.

Jacquie to open her heart to God and accept His Love and Grace.

Hap and *Ryan* both ask you to pray they might be able to trust God will help them make the right decisions at the right time and not to worry uselessly, to change those things they can change, accept those things they cannot change, sleep well to be able to do the correct things with a clear head and that they will open their hearts to the Holy Ghost.

Armed Forces & Contractors

Airman Donny Patton (Kadena AB, Japan), Jordan (USMC – 29 Palms), Trevor (USAF - KC-10 Boom Operator), Trevor (USN – Whidbey Island, EF-18 Pilot), Kurt Thomas (USN – Guam)

Persecuted

Around the world, Christians are under attack, not only in the Muslim world, but from Hindus and others in India. Also, they are under continual attack in the name of "Separation of Church and State" in the western world, as it becomes actively atheist or pro-devil buddy. Please pray for God's guidance and protection for all persecuted Christians and those around them.

Thanksgiving

Ryan and David Hopkins give thanks for safe travel to Dillsburg, Pennsylvania.

Various Special Requests

We ask that you pray, please ask God that the Holy Ghost might give you insight into

how you might make the lives of your friends and family better. Remember helping others is not just those who you don't know!

Please join us in praying that the *Free Teen Guitar Class* will be continue to be an opportunity for God to work in the lives of the kids and their families. Please ask God to guide the class to new opportunities to make Him known to others. Help us to let the love of our Lord shine through us into their lives, putting Him first, so that He might enter in to their hearts and lives.

Question that only you can ask

What would you like to know about our history, what we believe, what we do or how we operate? Hap is looking for material for the continuing education class and *Thought for the Day* material. Help us help you. Please send your question to Hap so we all can get an answer. Just because you don't know the answer to your question doesn't mean you are the only one who doesn't know. But, if you don't ask, no one will know.

I'd like to get a different point across or announce something

If you have a different point of view, I would be happy to give you room to get your point across. While this publication is my perspective on events, I recognize not everyone may agree and that some people would like to express their own opinion. If you want to write something, please forward your item to Hap (with a note as to whether or not you would like editing help) to: hap@faithfulcenturion.org.

Epistleers

We post the list of Epistle Readers in the Sunday Report each week so you can either plan your attendance or your pre-reading as the spirit so moves you.

Date	Reader
3 June 2012	Dru Arnold – Trinity Sunday
10 June 2012	Dru Arnold – First Sunday after Trinity
17 June 2012	Dru Arnold – Second Sunday after Trinity
24 June 2012	Dru Arnold – Nativity of St. John Baptist, superseding the Third Sunday after Trinity
1 July 2012	Dru Arnold – Fourth Sunday after Trinity
4 July 2012	Dru Arnold – Independence Day
8 July 2012	Dru Arnold – Fifth Sunday after Trinity
15 July 2012	Dru Arnold – Sixth Sunday after Trinity
22 July 2012	Dru Arnold – Seventh Sunday after Trinity

The near future, as well as Next Sunday

3 June 2012 – Trinity Sunday – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

10 June 2012 – First Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

17 June 2012 – Second Sunday after Trinity – Holy Communion - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

24 June 2012 – Nativity of St. John Baptist superseding the Third Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

1 July 2012 – Fourth Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

4 July 2012 – Independence Day – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

8 July 2012 – Fifth Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

15 July 2012 – Sixth Sunday after Trinity – Holy Communion - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

22 July 2012 – Seventh Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

29 July 2012 – Eighth Sunday after Trinity – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**