



Anglican Orthodox Church

Worldwide Communion

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day



Sunday Report



Christmas Letter from the Presiding Bishop - December 2015



8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-11)

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (Matt 2:1-2)

The proclamation of the great Angel of the news that would be of great joy, which shall be to all people, opens the deep fountains of joy in my own heart to know that I am among those "all people" who have known and believed upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. God set aside a nation apart from every nation in the world which was

Israel, His chosen nation. That nation was both political and spiritual. The political could not save, but the spiritual would. It is the spiritual Israel that are the true children of Abraham because they have believed that same Promise of the coming Seed of Promise that is Christ Jesus. There was a sequence to the first coming of Christ: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Gentile). (Romans 1:16)*

The very night of the birth of our Savior, the Angel of the Lord appeared to the poor Jewish shepherds who were on the hills overlooking Jerusalem, *“keeping watch over their flocks by night.”* These men were as near the Lord that night as the shot of an arrow; however, there was another group comprised of distant Gentiles who had seen and followed the Star that heralded His coming. They followed from far away Persia, and they traveled for months on end across mountain, desert sands, rivers, and trails perilous for the times. They were not privileged to see the Christ-Child on the night of His birth, but much later. When they arrived, He was already lodged in a house. But the time of our coming to Christ is of no consequence to our salvation. The most important consideration is that our hearts respond to His Light and that we come ere the “Door of the Ark” is closed.

So all who are the Elect are the children of Abraham – you and I are in that category if we have been called and chosen in Christ! Our status with God is not decided upon by national boundaries or racial concerns. It is totally based upon the response of our heart as orchestrated by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost.

Today, the world is trying to reject the reality of Christmas; but there is a clumsy little detail around which they cannot maneuver: *“What happened 2,015 years ago that was so critically important that our calendars are based upon that wonderful event?”*

As Tiny Tim proclaimed at the end of Dickens’ Christmas Story:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND GOD BLESS US – Everyone!

Jerry L. Ogles, DD
Presiding Bishop Anglican Orthodox Communion Worldwide
Chancellor, Faith Theological Seminary

Christmas Day, 2015

Today marks my seventy-second Christmas Day celebration. Though my physical strength may have dimmed a bit from my younger days, the beauty and mystery of Christmas has only grown more vivid and endearing. The glory of Christ is shed abroad in the hearts of His people from Alabama to California; Canada to Argentina; Peshawar to Belgrade; and the Solomon Islands and south Pacific to France and England.

But Christmas does not past with the date of 25th December. It continues on for twelve days of the Christmas Season; and it then continues on the our hearts the year round. There is absolutely nothing inappropriate about singing, O Come all ye Faithful, or Silent Night, or Joy to the World in June as well as December.

Christ came for a purpose - to change the hearts and minds of mankind and turn them back to God. He does not desire a passive faith that hides behind a piety of a contrived faith that believes we should not influence government, society, or neighbors with the Gospel of Christ or the Moral Law of God. There is no room for armchair

Christianity. We are to be about our Father's business, and that business may require us to defy Caesar and believe God. It may also require the shedding of blood. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb 9:22 KJV) To courageously stand against the evils of the world as Christians is to be the salt and light that God has commanded us to be.

Of course, Christ is that Light that came to shine in a darkened world for us; and we become that Light as well when we reflect that love and light in our lives. The Light that illumined the hills 2,15 years ago over Bethlehem, and appeared as a gleaming Star to the Wise Men, provoked a response in the hearts of those who saw it - and we are no different. Our society and government will continue to sink into decadence and decay unless Christian men and women stand up for those values Christ came to instill; in our hearts.

Merry (Continuing) Christmas!

Bishop Jerry

God and the Founders of our Country

Despite some Americans preoccupation with the secularization of Christmas, our Founders, the framers of our Declaration of Independence and Constitution, had no such concerns about public expressions of faith, as none was warranted. Conversely, they were bold about promoting Christianity and speaking about their own faith.

Historian Peter Lillback, author of "Sacred Fire," an exhaustive scholarly treatise on George Washington, notes that it is only in recent years, with the searchable digital publication of our Founders' writings, that we get an accurate picture of their faith, and expression of same.

Lillback writes, "Washington referred to himself frequently using the words 'ardent,' 'fervent,' 'pious,' and 'devout.' There are over one hundred different prayers composed and written by Washington in his own hand. He described himself as one of the deepest men of faith of his day when he confessed to a clergyman, 'No Man has a more perfect Reliance on the alwise, and powerful dispensations of the Supreme Being than I have nor thinks his aid more necessary.' Although he never once used the word 'Deist' in his voluminous writings, he often mentioned religion, Christianity, and the Gospel. He spoke of Christ as 'the divine Author of our blessed religion.' He wrote of 'the blessed religion revealed in the Word of God.' He encouraged seekers to learn 'the religion of Jesus Christ.' He even said to his soldiers, 'To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian.'

Believe it or not, Washington did not need to consult pollsters or focus groups, as general or president, before issuing proclamations of faith. He spoke them from his heart, just as most of our Founders did.

From the Founders Themselves

To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian.

George Washington

Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. ... The Hand of providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.

George Washington

The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God. ... The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity.

John Adams

I [rely] upon the merits of Jesus Christ for a pardon of all my sins. ... I conceive we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world ... bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is the Prince of Peace. ... We may with one heart and voice humbly implore His gracious and free pardon through Jesus Christ, supplicating His Divine aid ... [and] above all to cause the religion of Jesus Christ, in its true spirit, to spread far and wide till the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.

Samuel Adams

That the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be continually increasing until the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.

John Hancock

Being a Christian ... is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast. ... The Bible is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed. ... This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one, which will make them rich indeed.

Patrick Henry

Condescend, merciful Father! to grant as far as proper these imperfect petitions, to accept these inadequate thanksgivings, and to pardon whatever of sin hath mingled in them for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior; unto Whom, with Thee, and the blessed Spirit, ever one God, be rendered all honor and glory, now and forever. ... The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts. ... Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.

John Jay

I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished anyone to be: sincerely attached to His doctrines in preference to all others. ... I am a real Christian -- that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Jefferson

I have sometimes thought there could not be a stronger testimony in favor of religion or against temporal enjoyments, even the most rational and manly, than for men who occupy the most honorable and gainful departments and [who] are rising in reputation and wealth, publicly to declare their unsatisfactoriness by becoming fervent advocates in the cause of Christ.

James Madison

How many observe Christ's birth-day! How few, his precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep Holidays than Commandments.

Benjamin Franklin

Christmas Eve

While this is an AOC publication, we are often asked as the Western Most Parish, how goes it in the far reaches of the unknown West? So, occasionally we put in some local color!

As the song goes, *Oh the weather outside is frightful, But the fire is so delightful, And since we've no place to go, Let it snow! Let it snow!* Actually, while we have had snow this year already, there was none for today not likelihood of any tomorrow! The Outside Air Temperature was a lovely 71°F and clear today and 47°F at Mount Olympus' 3,500' msl altitude, as we ended our service, so no snow. We are thankful for the coming of our Lord and the freedom we have. The weather was bright and sunny, as were the dispositions of the three people attending the service were!

By the way, each year we have a rosemary bush Christmas "tree" that we plant afterwards. No shortage ever of that seasoning here, or bay leaf for matter!



On Point

Someone asked, where do the quotes come from? The answer is from the people who uttered them. But, how did you find them? Oh, that. Some from Bishop Jerry, many from Rev Bryan Dabney, a few from other places, some from Rev Geordie Menzies-Grierson, but overall mostly from Bryan. He always has some great ones to share. On to the On Point quotes –

Government has three primary functions. It should provide for military defense of the nation. It should enforce contracts between individuals. It should protect citizens from crimes against themselves or their property. When government-- in pursuit of good intentions tries to rearrange the economy, legislate morality, or help special interests, the cost comes in inefficiency, lack of motivation, and loss of freedom. Government should be a referee, not an active player.

Milton Friedman

When you see that trading is done, not by consent, but by compulsion- When you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing- when you see that money is flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favors- when you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your

laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you- when you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice- you may know that your society is doomed.

Ayn Rand
Atheist, but correct on economics
Atlas Shrugged

Truth

"I suppose there are two views about everything," said Mark.

"Eh? Two views? There are a dozen views about everything until you know the answer. Then there's never more than one."

Jack Lewis
That Hideous Strength

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.

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.

We used the propers for the first service of Christmas Day for our Christmas Eve service which are found on Page 96-98, with the Collect first:

The Collect.

O GOD, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thine only Son Jesus Christ; Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

The Epistle, which came from Paul's letter to Titus beginning in the Eleventh Verse of the Second Chapter. Paul tells Titus that it is only God's grace that gives us salvation. If we are going to accept that grace, we need to live the life to which God has called us. Regardless of cost, we need to live the life God has purchased for us.

We need to trust in God and in this world live cleanly, conservatively, thoughtfully,

looking towards God for our salvation. We need to encourage and exhort other Christians to do likewise.

To live in harmony with others.

To be, to the extent we are able, paragons of virtue. Serving as good examples, not bad. Paul tells Titus to do what is right, trust in God and worry not. Quoting a later author, "Trust in God and Dread Naught."

THE grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Tonight's Gospel is the narrative of the Nativity from the Gospel according to Saint Luke, the Second Chapter, beginning at the First Verse.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 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. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Sermon - Rev Hap Arnold

Church of the Faithful Centurion - Descanso, California

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



As I was readying tonight's sermon, the thought came to me, surely not original at all, that as we begin our celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, consider Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, was sent by His Father, God the Father, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, into this world that we might have life eternal. While it is an amazing thing that God would send His only begotten Son, His Christ, here to this miserable planet for our redemption, is even more amazing and worthy of awe that

Jesus came to this world knowing how He would leave. He knew he would be born in

a manger and die on a cross; a horrible horrible death that we might have eternal life. As we go through Christmas and we remember the joy, remember Jesus, the Christ of God, came into this world with full knowledge aforethought as to how He would leave and yet He came that we might live.

Tonight we remember and celebrate the coming of our Lord, the first time; we look to the coming of our Lord, the second time. The Jews were looking to God to send the Messiah, the one who they determined would free them from the brutal yoke of the Romans and put them on top again. They looked to being the veritable Top Dogs. They wanted a Champion to lead them to victory over the Romans, throwing the Roman yoke off Israel. What God sent was a baby. Well, *The Baby*, but nonetheless a baby. Shepherds came to worship Him, but Herod was looking to kill Him. No good in having a Champion putting Herod out of the well paying petty quisling dictator job.

What God sent the Jews was His only begotten Son. In point of fact, He sent Him to the Jews first, but not only. The "Wise Men" showed up to worship Him and regardless of who they might have been, they certainly were not Jews. This Son was to free the Jews from the Prince of Darkness and the finality of death. That really did not fit the Jews' plan.¹ They were still looking for Expulsor, he who would toss the Romans out on their heads.

"Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge².", With sure confidence, if we receive him now as our Redeemer, we shall be filled with sure confidence of being received by Him when we are standing before his Judgement seat. If we do not joyfully receive him now, how can we expect him to be joyfully receiving us when we come to meet him.

In joyous rememberence of His Birth, we must keep in mind the end goal of his arrival here on Earth, which was to free us from the bondage of sin and death, by giving his life so that we might be free of this terrible oppression. We must Rejoice always and again I say Rejoice, in the fact that we are free from the wages of sin, by the fact that He gave his life for us, and was born that He might save us from a final death.

The key word is joyfully, meaning we must of our own free will receive Him into our hearts, and feel the joyousness of His Birth, for this holiday of His Birth is a happy time, to not only feel the joy of his physical arrival, but of what He came to do for us, that we might be free for all eternity. He shall be our confidence and our spiritual dwelling place, rather than place our hope in men, who shall always fall short, but God shall never lead us astray or fall short of our hopes and expectations, unlike Men.

Remembering His Birth each year, we must consider what the cost was for our freedom from death, which soon after he ascended to be with Our Father.

Some guy coming to save their souls, without the need for slaughtering the profitable sacrificial animals did not really fit their plan. They had The Law, what more did they need?

¹ By the way, it has been said if you really want to make God laugh, tell Him your plan. I don't take credit for the thought, but sadly I do not know where I first heard it.

² From the Collect for the day.

The Jews concentrated on their wants and ignored their needs. Need, Want – both four letter words, oft used interchangeably. Sadly, they don't mean the same thing.

So, that is where the Jews were on Christmas Eve; Christmas Day for that matter? God intended to fulfill their needs, they looked to have their wants fulfilled.

How about us on this Christmas Eve; or Christmas Day for that matter? Are we looking for someone to make us rich, thin or cool? Or are we looking for someone who will save our souls? Do what God asks, you will not only gain eternal life, but eternal happiness and as a plus you will be happy. You may think you can have more fun, but He guarantees you will be happy.

As we come upon this midnight clear, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ waits for us. Will we accept it? Follow Him, accept His Grace and all will be good forever.

He comes!

Be of God - Live of God - Act of God



Christmas Day

The weather for the Christmas Day service was very nice, 54°F, the blues skies of a Santa Ana (not a Santa Claus) and a lot of wind. The lovely weather brought 3 people to worship the Lord on the day of his birth.

Propers

The propers for today are found on Page 96-98, with the Collect first:

**The Nativity of our Lord, or the Birthday of Christ,
commonly called Christmas Day.**

[December 25.]

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave.

The Epistle for Christmas Day came from the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, the First Chapter, beginning at the First Verse:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

The Gospel for Christmas Day came from the Gospel according to Saint John, the First Chapter, beginning at the First Verse. This particular Gospel is known as the Last Gospel as it comes from the last Gospel to be written, that of St. John, and it brings the final Word of Jesus to us.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Sermon - Rev Hap Arnold

Church of the Faithful Centurion - Descanso, California

Today's sermon is the message of Christmas. "He came unto His own and they received Him not." Christ came unto His own, the people he created, to show them the Word which He is the living embodiment of, the Living and True Scripture. They received Neither the written Word that his Apostles wrote, nor the spoken Word from His Mouth that He spake unto them. "But as many as received Him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God." He has adopted us unto his family, through His Word, which he has spoken unto us, that we may fulfill it and live in harmony with others in this word.



"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This speaks to the living incarnate nature of the Word, (Christ) who dwelt among us 2,000 years ago, that He might understand our nature more, so that He could teach us with more understanding. If He lived in our conditions, it would be easier for Him to relate to us when He taught and spake the Word of His Father. "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In That Word, He spake both full of grace and of truth as John talked about in the last Gospel. Through His grace and truth that we accept, only can we do things for His Glory. Without the Word, we cannot do anything for Him, as imperfect creatures, now having been accounted and spoken for by Christ. With the Word, we are empowered to do things for Him. The birth of Christ would foreshadow his death, which would bring about the ultimate freedom, that from sin and death.

That is such an important point. ¹⁶*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) Not just that God, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, would send His only begotten Son, but that the Son came knowing not only that He, King of Kings, would be born in a manger, live a life of relative poverty, but that He would die a horrible horrible death that we might have eternal life. He came to this miserable planet for us, to give us life eternal! He knew when He came here precisely how He would leave, yet He came anyway. Think of that on this Christmas Day!

Today we recall the birth of our Lord and Savior, the only means by which we, imperfect creatures with free will, might be accounted as perfect before God when our day of judgment comes. Born, not in a palace, but in a stable, He is all that we have been promised. Taking the substance of Man, all Man and all God, He knows our temptations, He knows our failures, He knows our failings, He knows our sorrow; He

also knows our happiness, our small triumphs, our hopes and our dreams. He is the only one in this world who will never fail us in the slightest. He gives us His example to follow. If we will but follow Him, we will draw closer to God. He made the world, He knows the world. He defeated the Prince of this World, thus with His Help, so will we. This is a day of joy, foreshadowing a day of sorrow, leading to the greatest joy of all.

Let us joyfully receive Him into our hearts and homes, that we might do what He asks and spread the Joy of His Arrival on Earth that we might prepare for His Second Coming. If we do this and what he asks, which is a common theme that stays the same throughout the Christian Year, we shall be Blessed with good things, as a result of doing what He asks. On the Christmas Day, let us Rejoice in His Coming and begin our preparations for His Second Coming

Let this be a blessed and happy Christmas. He has come to us!

Be of God - Live of God - Act of God

Roy Morales-Kuhn, Bishop and Pastor - St. Paul's Anglican Church - Anglican Orthodox Church

Bishop Roy is pastor of the biggest AOC parish West of the Mississippi and is in charge of the Diocese of the Epiphany.

Christmastide
God Manifest to us; Bread, Light and The Gift
25 December 2015 AD

The Collects:

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.



O GOD, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thine only Son Jesus Christ; Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may wit sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world with out end. Amen.

The Epistle.
Hebrews 1:1-12

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the

angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

The Gospel.
St. John 1:1-16

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

We most commonly associate Christmas with a cool or frigid time of the year. We are not really happy if we don't get the cold, snow or other "seasonal" weather that is supposed to be part of our collective memories of this time of the year. I grew up in the tropics, similar to a number of our overseas AOC dioceses. To me Christmas was a warm 85 or 90 degree day, lots of sunshine, tropical trade winds rattling the palm fronds and a cacophony of tropical birds in the background. I did not see snow until I was almost 10 years old. So to me Christmas can be an experience of the tropics or of the temperate zone, it really doesn't have to be cold. (I decorated palm trees with Christmas lights when I was a child). So what to think, now that we have been having very moderate temperatures this year? It isn't the weather my friend, it is the meditation on HIS WORD; this is the real reason for the season. Christ has come and he will come again.

Well let us reflect on the two collects that were written for this most special time of the year.

These collects reflect a time in the past when many parishes had at least two Christmas Day services, one early and the second one say maybe closer to noon. It gave the pastors a choice and options for meaningful scripture, but in all ways pointing to the Nativity and Christ.

The first collect praises God the Father in his gift, the gift of his Son, the only-begotten Son. We reflect on his miraculous birth, "...born of a virgin...". Then we pray that God will regenerate us and make us children of God, by adoption, and asking for

the renewing of our spirit by the Holy Spirit. We then ask this in the name of the Triune God we worship and praise, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", one God, world without end. *Amen.*

The second collect for this day, asks that God make us glad in this time of remembrance of the birth of His only Son Jesus Christ. We further ask that God help us to receive {Jesus} joyfully as our Redeemer. This all being in the preparation of the final judgement, when He will be our great and final Judge, a timely reminder to mind the days we have here on earth. And then we once again ascribe and profess the Triune God, Judge {Jesus}, Holy Ghost, and God the Father, one God, world without end, *Amen.*

The collects bring our minds into focus; they help us 'collect' our thoughts. Now we can listen to the very Word of God and be laser-focused on the real meaning of His Word.

And what a choice of the Word, literally. In our first two selections, the Hebrews 1:1-12, the author is reminding the Hebrew people of their heritage. He is reminding them that it was through this insignificant or remnant of a people, the Hebrews {Jews}, God would send His Son to redeem the whole world. All of mankind would be redeemed, if they recognized and accepted this divine gift, the Son of the Living God, Creator of the world and all that is therein, including, human beings. Believe it Mankind, believe it.

Then to ascribe the Divine to the now offered Son of God, we read in the Gospel of John the very nature and mysterious concept of a Triune God. This passage causes such 'heartburn' to many; so much so that several large cultic groups have developed over the centuries. Islam, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, etc. All of these groups came about because their founders could not wrap their puny human mind around that concept. TRINITY. I must confess, I can't fully understand it, buy why? Because I am cursed with a finite human body that does not "compute" the wonders and majesty of the Divine. God sent his Son to live with us; {Emmanuel}, his Son then willingly gave up his Life to die on the Cross to set us free. Then He rose again, to show that we too would one day rise again, He then sent a Comforter, {the Holy Spirit} to guide us and give us comfort until that Day. Yes, I will confess, I do not understand that Holy concept, and yet I read it and believe it, because God has revealed it in his Word. That is what John 1:1 proclaims, LOUD and CLEAR. Read it again and again, let your mind, heart and soul embrace what God has done for his creation. AMEN.

Please take the time to come away from all the festivities of this day and reflect on the four passages of scripture set aside for the Nativity. Each one gives us a glimpse of what is so important about this season in the Church calendar. Read all four of these passages, this is so important to our understanding what God has done for us so many eons ago.

Light

We read about Light. He is the Light of the world. He is the blessed hope that faithful Hebrews had been looking to see for hundreds of years. "...who being the brightness of his glory...". This theme is very popular at this time of the year because of the short days and long nights. God is light, His Son shines into this world to reveal the need for his coming; to save that which is lost.

Bread

Bread of Life (the city of Christ Jesus birth is in Hebrew 'house of bread') we

know He is the Bread of Life. When we take Holy Communion, we feed on this Bread of Life, Christ told us that, the Bread, which was broken for us on the Cross is represented by the bread of the Holy Communion.

The Gift

On this topic we should close this meditation on the Word of God. The Gift. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And finally we read of the wonderful news, the evangel, "...Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David {Bethlehem: house of bread}, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

"...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Let us pray:

O LORD, Heavenly Father, we join our unfeigned thanks for all thy mercies; for our being, our reason, and all other endowments and faculties of soul and body; for our health, friends, food, and raiment, and all the other comforts and conveniences of life. Above all, we adore thy mercy in sending thy only Son into the world, to redeem us from sin and eternal death, and in giving us the knowledge and sense of our duty towards thee. Please assist us in remembering this most important day, the Nativity of your Son, who came to dwell among us, to save us from our sins. We bless thee for thy patience with us, notwithstanding our many and great provocations; for all the directions, assistances, and comforts of thy Holy Spirit; for thy continual care and watchful providence over us through the whole course of our lives; and particularly for the mercies and benefits of the past day; beseeching thee to continue these thy blessings to us, and to give us grace to show our thankfulness in a sincere obedience to his laws, through whose merits and intercession we received them all, thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The near future, as well as Next Sunday

26 December 2015 – Saint Stephen – 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**

27 December 2015 – Saint John – 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**

28 December 2015 – Holy Innocents – 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**

3 January 2016 – First Sunday after Christmas – 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**

6 January 2016 – The Epiphany – Evening Prayer - Service start time 1800 (6:00 pm); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 1745 (5:45 pm); **Time 1800 (6:00 pm); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

10 January 2016 – First Sunday after Epiphany – 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**

Greetings from around the AOC World



====

Bishop Jerry Ogles & AOC family,

On behalf of Anglican Orthodox Church of Pakistan and Faith Theological Seminary
Gujranwala,

I wish you a very blessed Christmas and Happy New Year. May the miracle of Christmas
fill your
heart with warmth and love.

+Ernest Jacob
Bishop of AOC Pakistan
Principal FTS Pakistan

====

Dear Bishop Jerry and AOC Family,
Happy Christmas and all the Best from God in New 2106.

Vlc. dr sc. Djurcik, Igor†

*Arhidjakon -namesnik Mitropolita AOC i episkopa SAD
Dekan Teoloske akademije "Sveti Timotije"*

ANGLIKANSKA ORTODOKSNA CRKVA

Crkva Svetog Luke

R. Srbija

====



Happy and blessed Christmas to all.

--

The Rev. Jack Andrew Servant in Christ

Fiji Islands

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Ps. 119:105

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.)”

====

Beloved in Christ,

My heart and prayers are with you and yours as you celebrate the birth of the Word become flesh. To think the One who is Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, would even care about lost sinners is amazing. That He would actually come to us in human flesh, to redeem us and make us His own, is beyond words. It is comforting to think on the reality of Immanuel, God with us in this dark world. Even more comforting are God’s promises of a New World of righteousness and peace, in which the Redeemed will live in the full Light of the presence and

knowledge of God.

Along with my warmest friendship and heartfelt prayers for a merry Christmas, I offer the words from a sermon by Augustine of Hippo. They, like all words about the Word Incarnate, hardly do justice to the miracle of the Incarnation, but they do give some understanding of the meaning of Scripture.

He by whom all things were made was made one of all things. The Son of God by the Father without a mother became the Son of man by a mother without a father. The Word Who is God before all time became flesh at the appointed time. The maker of the sun was made under the sun. He Who fills the world lay in a manger, great in the form of God but tiny in the form of a servant; this was in such a way that neither was His greatness diminished by His tininess, nor was His tininess overcome by His greatness.

~Augustine of Hippo

Bishop Dennis Campbell

=====

... Intellectuals to suggest that we are living in a "post-Christian" America and era. It certainly feels that way.

Last week, in a compelling essay in *The Weekly Standard*, Andrew Ferguson objected to that depressing conclusion. Ferguson said, ". . .we don't live in a post-Christian age after all, not really. More to the point, it's impossible to live in a post-Christian age."

He is right, of course. Certainly, America in the hands of the secular left might finally succeed in destroying the evidence of Christianity in our fair republic. It is possible that someday, God forbid, our churches in America will be historic curiosities and more like museums than the places where voices were raised to the heavens singing praises to Immanuel.

But the Christian era won't be over even if America loses its way.

The Baby was born. History was split in two. God became man. Angels announced the Good News. The blind saw. The lame walked. The cross beckoned. The perfect lamb climbed it! Our sins were washed away. The stone was rolled away. Death was defeated. The gates of hell did not prevail.

When He returns in glory, every knee will bend, every head will bow, praise will fill the air, and, if not, "the very stones will cry" out their adoration.

While we must continue the battle, do not ever doubt that when history ends the King of all kings will be on the throne!

Merry Christmas, my friends. Gary L. Bauer

From The Diocese of The Epiphany

May God bless and keep all faithful believers this blessed Day. Even as our brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of this globe are already experiencing the day after Christmas; let us continue in the celebration of Christmastide, the twelve days thereof, and in praying and remembering all of our AOC diocese and parishes world wide. May God bless us all in this coming New Year, ever forward in the building of His Kingdom.
Amen.

In Christ alone; during Christmastide;
Roy Morales-Kuhn

Bishop of The Diocese of The Epiphany: The Anglican Orthodox Church; International.
Bishop for African Missions and Administrative Oversight.
Rector of St.Paul's Anglican Church

=====

From Canada

To Bishop Jerry Ogles and the whole AOC worldwide community

Merry Christmas and God's richest blessing to all

from Rev. Doug and Kim Richardson and family of Gladstone, Manitoba, Canada.