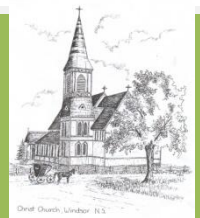


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Rector's Ramblings



It was nice to receive a pleasant note from a Bishop, in this case, the Bishop of Algoma, Stephen Andrewes, who preached and gave a series of meditations at the 30th Atlantic Theological Conference in Moncton this spring (where I gave a paper entitled *Matters Essential & Matters Indifferent in 17th century English Theology*). Reflecting on “the vagaries of time and the ups-and-downs of fortune, finance and folly,” a line from our little Parish history, *Gates of Heaven*, which I had given him, he noted that “sadly, it is more often the parishioners more than the bureaucracy that need to recapture the vision of what the church is meant to be. Pray for us, as I shall for you.” This was just a few days before the meeting of General Synod in Halifax.

I think he is quite right, though the burdens of that particular form of folly (i.e., bureaucracy) in the Anglican Church of Canada cannot be overlooked, or excused, as having contributed greatly to the loss of vision and delight that besets the Church. The power of the bureau (office) has been at the expense of the Church in the land. And yet, there are the signs of a stirring, an awakening to, dare

I say, ‘sense and sensibility’ (with apologies to Jane Austen).

There has never been as much mention and reflection about the foundational principles of our Anglican Christian identity as there has been in the last two decades. That is a kind of miracle, given the dismissive disregard that the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Ordinal, once received in church circles. In a way, we are living through the consequences of the ‘60s, known in theological terms as the time of the Death of God theology. It would be more accurate to say that it was about the Death of Theology. Now we are witnessing, perhaps, to the rebirth of theology. But like all forms of birth, it is both painful and messy.



The challenge, as Bishop Andrewes suggests, lies not only with the leadership but with the parishioners, too. In a way, that speaks to a classical Anglican sensibility – the idea of priest and people together. It means a proper respect for each in accord with the doctrinal principles that govern and define our spiritual identity. This is where the challenge lies. The vestiges of the ‘60s are with us

in the demand to re-image and re-define the Christian Faith. Lately, there is the growing realization that the revolutionary praxis is flawed. There can be no renewal and no reform without a real and deep commitment to the foundational principles of the Christian Faith. The Prayer Book, the Articles, and the Ordinal provide the form of our Anglican understanding of the essentials of the Christian Faith revealed in the witness of the Scriptures and proclaimed in the ordered life of the Church. The current task is not about a retreat into nostalgia but about a vital and vigorous engagement between the catholic principles of our reformed tradition and the contemporary culture in all of its confusions. There are no easy solutions; only a certain steadfastness and a serious commitment to Christ and his Church is required.

It means the “recaptur[ing] of the vision of what the church is meant to be,” as the good Bishop suggests. And that is surely our task at Christ Church. It is not about going through the motions of the liturgy mindlessly but in a way that is mindful of their power and truth. The liturgy for Anglicans is not primarily about a kind of emotive experience, though the emotions cannot be ignored. It is rather about a kind of

contemplative commitment in which the heart and the mind are fully engaged and challenged. It is there before us Sunday after Sunday. It does not lend itself to dipping in and out as fancy takes us. It requires focus and attention.

Nothing could be more difficult in the culture of distraction which, for Anglicans, sometimes takes the form of *liturgico agitato*, 'agitated liturgy.' This betrays the meditative and contemplative approach to Word and Sacrament which belongs to our identity. Identity lies at the core and is what is capable of embracing and comprehending true and legitimate differences. The embrace of diversity without an understanding of identity only leads to unease and distraction and, eventually, death.

There are the beginnings of a kind of remembering that arises out of the forms of our agitated forgetting. There is no cure for our ecclesiastical Alzheimer's apart from a renewed vision of what defines us. It is all there to be reclaimed and rethought. I have to say that in my own poor way this is what I have been attempting in my ministry among you.

The last six months have been momentous in the life of our parish. We have seen the miraculous success of the Christ Church Heritage Foundation campaign, largely due to the extraordinary capabilities of Mrs. Barbara Hughes. We have sold the

Rectory and its adjoining lands. In February 2010, we received Provincial Heritage designation for the Church. We have been blessed musically with the special service of Evensong with the King's College Chapel Choir at the beginning of their tour to the States. And we have withstood "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" arising from the follies of the contemporary Church. "Sweet are the uses of adversity," but only if, like Prospero in *The Tempest*, we can also pray and say "let us not burden our remembrance with a heaviness that is gone". At the very least, we might like Caliban say, "I'll be wise hereafter and seek for grace."



The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

(June 24th) within the week of the summer solstice,

marks the long, slow march to Christmas. It does so by strongly reminding us of the providential preparations God makes for our salvation in the coming of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It recalls us to those preparations of grace which alone can make us wise both now and hereafter, come what may, in the course of all our follies. One of the great wonders of this feast day is the theme of humility. John the Baptist points us to Christ, to the one who comes and the one who makes his way within us, but only through the necessity of repentance. It is not too much to say that a positive view of repentance as a regular and necessary facet

of Christian life is one of the strong features of our Prayer Book tradition. To confess our sins, after all, is to confess the God who is the forgiveness of our sins. John the Baptist emphasizes this point. His ministry was about preaching "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." He is not that forgiveness, but awakens in us our desire for the one who comes "who is greater than I, the latchet of whose shoes," John says, "I am not able to unloose." That is humility, the humility that alone can take hold of the high things of God. The Nativity of John the Baptist belongs to the beginnings of our summer sojourning in the way of grace, the way of Christ within. It cannot happen without our attention to his Word and Sacrament.

The summer should be a time of reflection and renewal. As in past summers, I will undertake services at Christ Church and Avon Valley Parish during July, and Fr. Tom Henderson will do the same for me during August.

The Fall newsletter will mark our beginning again with such programmes as the Christ Church Book Club and the 'Cinema Paradiso' movie nights.

Marilyn joins me in wishing everybody a blessed summer. We hope to host another Parish Picnic in September at our place on Grey Mountain Road in Falmouth.



Fr. David Curry