



Newsletter

Diocese of the West

December, 2014

Vol. I Issue 4

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Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I pray this finds you all in good health and enjoying this blessed time of celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with His Blessings.



“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.” John 1:14

The Bishop’s Corner

Secular media today pays scant attention to religion, unless it is some hideously negative story of pedophile priests or Muslim suicide bombers or similar. Yet Pope Francis has the marvelous and envious gift of being able to get wide media attention in a positive way. Despite uninformed media chatter on his statements, they have until now all been easily within official Roman Catholic doctrine. He has the knack of saying it in a way that sounds radical, even though it isn’t. And more importantly, he says it in a pastoral context reflecting the love of Christ for us, rather than in the legalistic format of his recent predecessors.

This time, he has pushed the envelope. What the media heard was his comment to a child that dogs can go to heaven. But his complete statement is remarkable and the media reads it as dogs and Protestants can now go to heaven, but that isn’t the real story. What he has done is to refute that salvation is simply a juridical forensic process whereby appropriate persons are granted salvation as humans from the prison



The Bishop's Corner (continued)

of this material world, but rather that God is saving the entire creation with us (and our dogs included). This viewpoint is that of most of the early Church and has always been the doctrine of Eastern Christianity. The scenario is that when mankind rebelled, thus distorting the world and messing up our dominion and stewardship of it and ourselves, God in his sacrificial love sent his son to effect the restoration of the world to its original condition of perfect paradise. The work is still in progress, as I am sure you can tell from the evening news, but has a fixed outcome determined by the victory of the Cross over death and Christ's consequent resurrection.

But since the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas introduced the patterns of the ancient Greek philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) into western Catholic theology, it has not been Roman Catholic thought, although, neither has it been specifically condemned by the Roman church as heretical. In the modern (as in the last seven centuries) Roman view, animals are part of an earthly inferior creation, as the ancient Greeks thought, and have no souls to be saved. In this view, creation itself will be wiped out and we humans (or at least many of us) will be snatched from this destruction. As the more informed media have pointed out, Pope Benedict stated quite clearly the Thomistic view and in particular stated that animals do not go to heaven, having no souls to be saved.

It is interesting that many evangelical Protestants, including some who think of the Pope as an agent of Satan, also follow the Thomistic view (usually without realizing

The Bishop's Corner (continued)

it) that salvation is a matter of getting the souls of the saved out of the sinful world before it burns. So Pope Francis is tackling a big chunk of Christians both inside and outside the Roman Church, although many Anglicans and some Lutherans, along with Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, would agree with him.

Pope Francis is on solid ground, with the weight of centuries of early Christian theologians behind him. He is reflecting Scripture and Tradition and challenging the deviation of western thought as influenced by Thomas Aquinas. He will endure considerable flak for this, because there are still many in the Roman Church who believe Mother Church is always right, even when it proclaims dogma that is clearly new in the history of Christian thought. They are puzzled that it is the Pope trying to reform them. Your bishop, though, votes with Pope Francis. God's wonderful plan of salvation for our universe returns us to the state of complete loving union with him that our species once enjoyed at the beginning.

It may surprise you that this is directly a Christmas message. I don't know why the Pope chose Advent to make his statement, but read Isaiah 11, one of our Advent readings, remembering that God is speaking through the prophet with a messianic announcement. Note how the Messiah is to lead all the animals in a way of peace and harmony to a restored paradise (see especially verses 6-9).

The coming of God's son to earth as a little child is the beginning of God's effective action

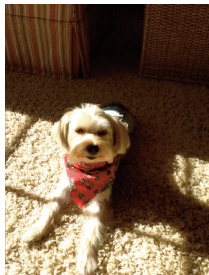


The Bishop's Corner (continued)

of restoration. It is indeed a program for peace on earth and God's loving good will towards mankind. It is not done by God clicking his remote, but by incarnation, the son becoming carnal, to soon walk his sacrificial road of love to Cross and Tomb. And sharing new life in a renewed creation, presided over by a humanity enveloped into the very Body of Christ, to this time do a stewardship of God's earth as directed by the Head. Thus, we have reason to celebrate Christ Mass, to indeed enjoy a Merry Christmas which will never end, but will continue until you and I are also perfectly restored in the Way and Day of the Lord.

And your dog can come too.

+Win
Your Bishop



Parish News

St. Michael and All Angels, Anglican Church

St. Michael's Church in Kerrville, Texas celebrated it's 20th year anniversary in September. Three Rectors were present, including the current one, Father David McMillan. Father Ben Holland delivered the Benediction at the end of the service and Father Mylan Maymar (the first rector) gave the prayer over the food.

St. Michael's parish looks forward to the Bishop's annual visit in January. A morning prayer and an evening prayer have begun weekly, as well as the regular Sunday Communion Service. New members have joined us, as well as a steady stream of visitors over the past year. The Lord has blessed us with a good leadership

Parish News (continued)

team with Deacon Herman Roark leading part of the Service.

Reverend David McMillan, Rector
St Michael and All Angels, Anglican Church
Kerrville, Texas

Messiah Mission

Messiah Mission of Mesquite, Nevada held an early Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on December 19th at Highland Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. In addition to our normal group, we were joined by several pastors and representatives from other community churches. Joining us were: Pastor Patrick O'Neal, Mesquite Lutheran, Pastor Dan Rhodes, Community Christian, Pastor Rick Casebolt, Mesquite United Methodist, Gary Jacobs, Deacon, La Virgen Guadalupe Roman Catholic, and Rob Gardner, First Baptist Church. Jaquita Byers of Community Christian Church provided the organ accompaniment. Each participant read a lesson and everyone joined in to sing the carols. A beautiful service was enjoyed by many of the residents.





Prayer Requests

Pray for the families of the slain New York City Police Officers, Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu.

Pray for Rev. Paul Howden and the members of Grace Reformed Episcopal Church in Scranton, PA as they seek a way forward as a parish.

Pray for the parishes of Christ the King, Arroyo Grande and Saint Luke's Chapel in the Hills, Los Altos Hills, CA as they seek to call new rectors.

Pray for those who will be alone this Christmas

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: The homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body and spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of you Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Book of Common Prayer)

Prayer by Lancelot Andrewes
submitted by Robert Herrell

Thou that givest food to all flesh,
which feedest the young ravens that cry unto thee
and has nourished us from our youth up: fill our
hearts with good and gladness and establish our
hearts with thy grace.

.Please remember to send your prayer requests to smprrp@sbcglobal.net so we can all be praying for those in your parish.

Hint of Humor



Happy St. Stephen's Day (Boxing Day)

December 26th

