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THE LINE

Newsletter of the Convocation Of The West
OF THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF ALL SAINTS

History 101

By Bishop Winfield Mott



As I witness it, several friends are slowly descending into the abyss of dementia, slipping away from milepost after milepost of their journey through life, gradually and painfully disappearing as their memory fails. Finally, the person is gone, unable to know closest friends and family or even themselves, or remember his or her lifestory, places, events, faith or song, time or space. It brings home that who we are hangs on the memory of our lifestory. Without that, we are a non-person, though we may take up space in a chair or bed. It is a crushingly sad and tragic process.

It is all about history. For many, that elicits a groan, a flashback to classroom days with the world going on outside the window or after class, but with the immediate present being a droning irrelevant lecture about long past dates and battles, when what was filling our minds was romance, cars, sports, friends and parties.

Yet history is in fact all we have, and the loss of my ability to comprehend my own history of being is dementia. Beyond that, it is a defect in America that we often do not comprehend our history well, be it our personal narrative or our shared one. It isn't so much about remembering when the War of 1812 took place or what happened at the Alamo, although I admit much history instruction has that kind of narrow focus. Rather, it is understanding the forces that shape me and those around me, that cause the failures and successes in our shared existence, whether micro or macro. It

is analyzing what in that narrative is fantasy and bias, a warp of reality, and what is the true tale.

History is especially relevant in our Christian Faith. Many religions depend on a book of unchanging rules. Others depend on a cycle of natural rhythm, an endlessly repeating cycle of life and death, seedtime and harvest. Neither category needs an historical perspective.

But Christianity depends on historical fact. On a spring weekend at Passover, precisely when Pontius Pilate was Governor, Jesus the incarnate Christ was crucified and rose again, in order that we might be restored to a right relationship with God and resurrected to a new life. If that did not happen, we are, as St. Paul comments, "to be pitied more than all men" (1 Cor. 15:19), because in that case, our faith is in vain. Our hope is not in a rulebook or the beauty of nature, but in an historical act.

This is why Jesus, who gives very few commands, commands us in our central act of worship and community to "do this in remembrance of me." As with the treatment of history in general, some distorted this to say that Jesus doesn't really mean his Body and Blood are in the bread and wine, but that bread and wine are only there to jog our memory about Jesus who no longer lives here. Conversely, those of us who take his words at face value and understand he is really present have often overreacted to this distortion by discounting his command to "do this in remembrance of me."

Our Core Value is:

"The Convocation of the West is Missionary, bringing people to Christ and meaningfully engaging in the transformation of the culture around us."



The Vision of the Convocation is:

*"To STRENGTHEN existing churches;
To PLANT new churches; and
To RAISE UP missional leaders."*

He is not commanding this so we can do it for old time's sake. Rather, the purpose of the memory is to make current that which happened in history, not in our imagination but in reality. The act of remembrance in the Eucharist brings forward the action of Maundy Thursday. Yet Maundy Thursday does not stand alone. The Body and Blood is that of Good Friday. Both lead seamlessly to Easter, the Day of Resurrection. It is one event, from Thursday through Sunday. "The understanding of the eucharist as 'for the *anamnesis* of Me' - as the re-calling before God of the one sacrifice of Christ in all its accomplished and effectual fulness so that it is here and now operative by its effects in the souls of the redeemed" comments Dom Gregory Dix, in his definitive work, "The Shape of the Liturgy."

Memory of the historical event ignites the immediate effectiveness of the current moment's celebration. We *recall*, re-call, call into being once again, the pivotal and central historical act of salvation equally relevant for contemporary time, joining with those "of all times and in all places" (BCP 1928).

Sadly, we encounter those whose memory appears to have been lost, who deny the historicity of the event and thus any ability to recall it. Relegating those days "under Pontus Pilate" to the mists of legend or to flights of wishful fantasy, their religion reverts to pious myths of natural regeneration or spiritual Platonic visions of immortal souls seeking a benevolent but remote god beyond the Creator. These people, who do not appear to suffer dementia otherwise and can discourse in grand theological form, nevertheless are afflicted with a serious amnesia about this most important historical fact of all time.

In America, it is made worse by the unfortunate separation of history into the two categories of secular history, covering stuff that really happened, and religion, which apparently transpires in a parallel universe. The latter consists of things which only happened if you believe they did and is outside the framework of "real" history. That the resurrection is simply historical fact is a novel and rather controversial idea for the American context. Yet fact is exactly what it is, a happening during the term of Pontius Pilate as Governor (people kept time until relatively recently by reference to the incumbent ruler).

Memory lane, it turns out, is an essential route for your very

existence, without which you are meaningless biomass. Memory lane collectively also recalls salvation history, centered in the pivotal events of Holy Week. To lack that collective memory causes a dementia with a serious collective worldview warp, sinking into that abyss mentioned above. Any valid reason for existence is forgotten, and we are faced with a population left with a greed-driven life and unfocused anger and confusion. The essential memory is that we are doing this life as our shared Eucharistic life, in remembrance of Him.

For those who have escaped the dementia, I greet you: "Christ is risen," the cry of this season and of all eternity. It is not "Christ was risen," because the memory of the event is re-called to our present reality in the everlasting celebration of Eucharist. It is not "Christ is risen if you believe He is," because the event does not in any way depend on your belief in it (although your salvation is not helped if you deny it). It is not, "new life comes in Spring, and Christ's Resurrection, although not actual, is a great myth to describe nature's process."

No! Christ is risen. Indeed, he really has, and it rocks through all history, the memory defines us, directs us and permeates our life to become Christ always among us.

"Make no mistake: if He rose at all, it was as His body;
if the cell's dissolution did not reverse, the molecules re-knit,
the amino acids rekindle, the Church will fall

It was not as the flowers, each soft Spring recurrent
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled eyes of the
eleven apostles it was as His flesh: ours...

Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy, side-
stepping transcendence; making of the event a parable,
a sign painted in the faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door."

— From John Updike, "Seven Stanzas at Easter"

The Perfect Love

By The Very Rev. Canon Michael Penfield

I was at a Roman Catholic Cathedral today for Passion Sunday. The Bishop for the Diocese of San Jose was celebrating. His sermon was quite good and, at the end, he made a point I found very interesting. He said that, when we look at Christ's crucifixion, we tend to see His suffering, but what we really should see is His love.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten

Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." [John 3:16]

Our society speaks a lot about love. We discuss it; we bemoan the lack of it; we cry that we "deserve" it. And yet, our society has probably the worst understanding of what love truly is. It is not "never having to say you're sorry." It is always having to say you're sorry.

Ayn Rand was an interesting American writer and atheist. She escaped from the Soviet Union as a young woman and became a self-styled "Objectivist". This was a term she coined herself. It was the philosophical belief that one must be absolutely objective in all matters. And, for this "reason", she was an unabashed capitalist that eschewed all charity and altruism. As antithetical as many of her beliefs were to Christianity, she had an interesting observation on love. She once wrote:

"To love a thing is to know and love its nature."

Not a bad observation. But how many people analyze their "love"? And how many loves can bear analysis? Further, should Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross be open to analysis? Sometimes our analysis of things pertaining to God creates more problems than they solve.

When I was a little boy, raised in the Catholic faith, I was taught about transubstantiation. For those who don't know, St. Thomas Aquinas tried to explain how the Bread and Wine became the Body and Blood of Christ during the consecration using Aristotelian philosophy. He said that the consecrated host and wine looked like bread and wine because the "accident" or appearance remained the same, but the "substance" had changed. For me, and my medieval mind, this made perfect sense, but for many, like the theologians of the Reformation, this was a terrible concept.

Likewise, the Reformation tried to explain the Atonement with its analysis called Penal Substitution, but many object to this belief. Those who object ask how could a loving, merciful God demand that His own Son be punished and scourged for the sins of the world.

Over the years, however, I have grown to appreciate a "good" mystery. Does it matter how it happens? What is important is that, in the Eucharist, we partake in the Body and Blood of Jesus. He is in us, and we are in Him. This is what is important. Likewise does it really matter what precisely happened during the Atonement?

What matters is that, during those gruesome hours, God and Man was reconciled through the sacrificial love of Christ.

Look at Jesus. Look at Him as He dies on the Cross. Every one of us should cry. Yes, we should cry for the loss. We should cry for the injustice. But ultimately we should cry because this is an act of love beyond comprehension. This is a love that encompasses the world and yet is personal. This is a love that may be generally offered to all, but, when accepted, becomes absolutely personal. This is a love that should speak to our soul. And it should fill us with awe for the mere fact that it IS incomprehensible.

We live in a time that does not understand this love because we do not understand love. St. John wrote in his first epistle:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us." [1 John 4:18-19]

We live in a fearful time, and I am not speaking just about Covid. We fear death; we fear being hurt; we fear being alone; and we fear not being loved. But maybe it is precisely our fear that chases out love. If love removes fear and perfect love removes all fear, even fear of death, then what does fear do? Does perpetuating fear drive out love? And is our fear making us a less loving society?

There comes a time for all believers to tune out the craziness of this world. There comes a time for us to stare at the Cross of Christ and see His love for us – each of us – individually. There comes a time to see the Risen Christ and know that we too will participate in His Resurrection because He loves us. And there comes a time to accept this perfect love and bask in its light and warmth and joy and then, give our imperfect love back.

May God's perfect love be with you all,
The Very Rev. Canon Michael Penfield
Vicar General for the Convocation of the West

Upcoming Virtual General Synod

The Missionary Diocese of All Saints will be holding their 2021 Virtual General Synod via Zoom, on **Saturday, May 22 at 10 am PDT, 11 am MDT, 12 noon CDT, 1 pm EDT**. This is an important Synod. We will be electing new representatives to several national councils and conducting the second vote on the Amendments to the Constitution and Canons of MDAS that were passed at our last virtual Synod. Therefore, we need to see as many of you as we can!

All clergy, including non-parochial and retired clergy, and the representatives of all parishes are to attend. Please make sure that you have elected your two representatives before that date and please send their names along with their phone numbers and their email addresses as soon as possible to your Vicar General at VicarGeneral@AnglicanCOW.org or 408-969-4915. **Please note that your Vicar General's email address may be different than the one you may have saved.**

If you or your representatives subsequently discover that you will not be able to attend, please notify your Vicar General as soon as you find this out.

We hope to see you all on our Zoom conference!

Upcoming Clericus 2021

Please note that this year's Regional Synod has been postponed until September. But the Anglican Convocation of the West will still be holding its annual Clericus in Mesilla, New Mexico, **April 13, 14, 15 and 16.**

If any one cannot attend because of financial reasons, the Convocation may be able to help. Please contact your Vicar General, the Very Rev. Canon Michael A. Penfield, at VicarGeneral@AnglicanCOW.org or at (408) 960-4915 so we may discuss what financial help we can offer.

Finally, because of the Pandemic, the Clericus will be a hybrid model. Those who cannot attend in person can do so via Zoom.

Please let our Vicar General know if you are going to attend the Clericus and whether it will be in person or via Zoom as soon as possible.

This promises to be an excellent Clericus. We hope to see you all there!

Featured Church of the Month

St. Luke's Chapel in the Hills, Los Altos Hills, CA

St. Luke's Chapel wishes you a blessed Lent and happy Easter!

We are a small but close-knit congregation located near the I-280 freeway in Los Altos Hills, Santa Clara County, California. In the years before the pandemic, we had been blessed to enjoy a few visitors each year at different times, people from near and far who appreciated both the beautiful, wooded surroundings of our Chapel and their tranquility, as well as the welcoming hospitality of our parishioners.

During the pandemic, our County and the State did not permit indoor services for most of the time, but now our County is allowing indoor services. Most of our services during the pandemic have been services of Morning Prayer on Zoom. Interestingly, the attendance at Morning Prayer on Zoom has been much better than attendance at Morning Prayer services in the Chapel before the pandemic. I celebrated Holy Communion once a month outside the Chapel, at times on Saturdays, so as not to conflict with the Sunday Morning Prayer services on Zoom. Now that we have returned to indoor services, I am celebrating Holy Communion combined with Morning Prayer on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Our Morning Prayer services are conducted on Zoom on the other Sundays of the month. We are

looking forward to holding a service of Holy Communion in our Chapel on both Palm Sunday and Easter Day.

Please pray for us as we anticipate a return to our regular Sunday schedule of services in the next month or two, as well as to singing hymns to the accompaniment of the organ in our Chapel. Pray also for us as Father Jonah Kelman upgrades our



website to a WordPress platform, that everyone in our parish will appreciate how effective a church website can be in directing visitors to our services, worship, and fellowship. Pray also for an increase in the zeal of our congregation, not only for worship, but also for sharing our faith with people who need salvation and a strong, growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray for our clergy, Father Chris Parrish, the Rector, and the Rev. Mr. Peter Vogel, the Deacon, as well as for their wives, Bridgitte, and Kimberly, respectively. Also pray for the Senior Warden, Clark Patteson, and for the Junior Warden, Kathy Slattery.

Father Parrish also teaches Latin part-time to third and fourth grade students at Canterbury Christian School, a mission of St. Paul's Anglican Church, whose Rector is the Rev. Fr. Steven Macias, who is also the Headmaster of the school.