
Ñ Contra Mundum Ñ

Volume III, Issue 6

January 2001

The Congregation of St. Athanasius - Roman Catholic, Anglican Use

<http://www.locutor.net>

NOTES FROM THE CHAPLAIN

ONE of the greatest symbols of the Christian life is the anchor. It may be seen portrayed in various combinations with saints or their shields. An anchor firmly secures a wave-tossed ship to the floor of the sea. This prevents the vessel being thrown up on the rocks and destroyed. In a storm, the vessel's hope is in the anchor.

For Christians, these two words go together. The anchor is a preeminent sign of our hope in Christ. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." (Hebrews 6:19)

At the beginnings of the new year, and at other times as well, Christians wonder if even after persevering in our prayers and struggling to overcome sins, our efforts seem to be fruitless. When we compare what God has given us to what we have given Him, it can all be very humiliating and devastating. But humility is a prerequisite for trusting God and not ourselves. The more emptied out we are, the more hope there is of our becoming Christians.



Jesus changes water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana.

In the lovely story of Christ's first miracle at Cana, there was the time before He turned water into wine. Yet Christ was there. The miracle happened in an instant in the moment He had planned for it. Our Lord plans such a moment for you and me, when in His providence for us the answer to prayer is given and the first victory over our temptations is granted us.

At the wedding feast we see cooperation and perseverance in the servants. When the supply of wine is exhausted, these servants were sent to Our Lady. At her direction they turned to Our Lord Jesus for help. And His instructions seemed totally

inadequate. Why should they haul gallons of water to fill empty jars? Yet not only did they do so, we are told "they filled them up to the brim." This was the triumph of their faith enduring hardships. It showed their cooperation with Christ in the time of trial. Not by coincidence was it the servants and not the governor of the feast who knew the source of the good wine. Although the Bible does not tell us, we would like to think these servants became our Lord's disciples.

The obedience of our faith is often rewarded by some manifestation of Christ's transforming power in our

lives, making us more than ever His disciples. It is good for us to remember our Lord's methods. For His own reasons, Christ waited until the bridegroom's pitchers were empty. Only when we have exhausted our limited human strength does Christ come to rescue us. Our extremity is often His opportunity. The rabbis had a saying "when the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses is born."

A soul faithful to the end of its trial will find that God has given it a new strength to meet the pressure, and the soul will also know that the Lord was with it all the time, just as Christ was at Cana before the miracle.

There is no better time for us to put our trust in Christ than when we are enduring the trials of our faith. For God makes something from nothing. He makes wine from water. He raises the dead. When His providence for us arrives, he will do His "many mighty works" in you and me.

FATHER BRADFORD

A PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

IMMORTAL Lord God, who inhabitest eternity, and hast brought us to the beginning of another year: Pardon, we humbly beseech thee, our transgressions in the past, and graciously abide with us all the days of our life; guard and direct us in all trials and temptations, that by thy blessing we may grow in grace as we grow in years, and at the last may finish our course with joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint of the Month



St. Sebastian
ca. 300

January 20

ACCORDING to legend, Sebastian was a soldier who enlisted as a Roman soldier around 283 at Rome, lending strength and support to the confessors Mark and Marcellian when they were in prison. The emperor Diocletian did not know he was a Christian and named him a captain of the Pretorian Guards.

Sebastian's further efforts to help other martyrs brought Diocletian's wrath down on him--orders were given that Sebastian should be shot to death with arrows. He was shot with arrows, but recovered enough to confront and reproach the emperor, a notorious persecutor of Christians, with his cruelty.

Sebastian was then beaten to death with clubs.

The familiar iconography of St. Sebastian's martyrdom, a young man shot full of arrows, became very popular in the 15th century. He is the patron of archers, and, like St. George and St. Maurice, a patron of soldiers. During the plague of the middle ages it was widely believed that his invocation would ward off the infection, so great had been his courage in facing the arrows.

St. Sebastian was buried in a cemetery on the Appian Way in Rome close to the basilica which bears his name.

CONVERSION OF S. PAUL



January 25

"What happens at conversion? For Paul its twin ingredients were the vision and the voice. Together they constituted one great reality (as they did also for Isaiah in the Temple-centuries before), and that reality was a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The meeting involved both seeing and hearing, for the whole ministry of Jesus had been concerned with making the blind to see and the deaf to hear. Seeing and hearing are the media for all personal encounter and communication. And meeting with Jesus always means seeing and hearing in a new way and at a new depth Paul's conversion involved both these--being confronted with Jesus and having conversation with Jesus.

He suddenly recognized that Jesus was real for him, that He was alive for him, and this came to imply . . . that Jesus had actually died for him. And he heard Jesus addressing him by name, ‘Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?’ The whole Gospel is a message addressed to each one by name, for the Good Shepherd calls His own sheep by name.”

Douglas Webster
“What is Evangelism?”

SHORT NOTES

Thanks to all for donations to the greening of the chapel for the Christmas season.

The Bradfords wish to thank the members of the congregation and friends for their many expressions of best wishes, and their gifts, at Christmastide.

Father Bradford preached at the annual Novena in Saint Brendan Church, Bellingham. This mission occurs on the nine days leading up to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was Fr. Bradford’s third visit to Bellingham.



Fri. Feb 2,
Candlemas,
Mass at 7:30pm

A PILGRIM’S PROGRESS BACK TO ROME

WHILE I was born a Catholic, the parish we attended was atypical for the period just after the Second World War. I was raised in Shaker Heights, then a very affluent suburb of Cleveland. The parish we attended was very Georgian to satisfy the standards of a WASP community. In many ways it looked more like the First Presbyterian Church of Shaker Heights. The interior was virtually devoid of ornamentation. Even the statue of Mary was plain white. You could say the church was about as “low church” as a Catholic Church could be. Consequently, I was predisposed toward a different type of Christian liturgy than one normally found in the Catholic Church of that period.

By the time I reached high school, the Catholic Church seemed generally stifling, legalistic, and triumphalist. Catholics seemed more like the Jewish leaders who asked Christ if it would be wrong to help a man get his donkey out of the ditch on the Sabbath. Only a Catholic could ask the question, “If I attend Mass before 4:00 P.M. on Saturday and it’s a wedding does it satisfy my Sunday obligation?” Being essentially pragmatic those kinds of questions just never occurred to be important to me. They also seemed not only to strip the faith of the rich possibilities suggested by Paul but also to endorse an emphasis on the “Law” so roundly condemned by him. When I entered an Episcopal Church for the first time and participated in

its rich liturgy I knew I was at home. The worship was orderly and majestic and filled one with the comforting serenity of the “beauty of holiness”. The Book of Common Prayer offered a simplified Daily Office for the laymen, a vernacular monastic tradition made available for all.

So how did I get back to Rome?

There are three traditions of the Church that are clearly anchored in Rome.

The Sacraments: I believe firmly that God’s creation is good. Our role in Creation is clearly stated in the first chapter of Genesis and again in the 8th Psalm. Each of the sacraments represents an affirmation that the key events in our lives are sacred because they come from God’s own creative hand and purpose. Therefore, the sacraments need to be central in our worship. The BCP offered for most of the past 400 years an affirmation of this relationship between God and Creation. However, once the Episcopal Church started to revise the Prayer Book, it stripped its liturgy of beauty and holiness both in form and substance. The actual size of the Prayer Book increased but it lost its familiarity and the unifying effect of an established common worship. Given the pragmatic nature of the Elizabethan settlement, the BCP is the source of Anglican unity and theology. Changes to it of necessity are like pulling a thread from a sweater. The sweater begins to unravel and so also the Anglican Communion.

Teaching Authority: It is said that Cardinal Newman once said when asked to toast the Pope, “I toast the pope but conscience first.” For some that may seem a liberal

viewpoint. However Innocent III observed that one was required to do what the conscience demanded but not what it would permit. Freedom of conscience is not the issue but rather how conscience is formed. Protestantism fails to address this question in a comprehensive way. Most Protestants seem happy to affirm the supremacy of conscience. The choice is

more sacred than God's purpose and intention. Somehow we are to affirm that reason is supreme no matter how poorly formed or ill considered. The Fundamentalist wants to find in the Bible a certitude that can be both irrational and unscientific. The fundamentalist interpretation offers an illuminism that is shaky stuff at best.

Rome has built a reasoned system for considering and addressing moral questions. They even consider it important that you know the truth but also that the truth can be known and that the Church offers special insights on it. If we are to use our reason to make informed, conscientious decisions, then we must form our conscience with prayer, the sacraments, and education based on scripture, tradition, and Church teachings. Chesterton captured the essence of this process when he spoke about the "democracy of the dead." Hence, so called progressive opinion that regards the availability of safe and legal abortion as enlightened is actually "bereft of vigor" and moral awareness.



Finally, since Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in the 1890s, the past 100 years have seen Rome willing to lead on the great issues of capital, labor, race relations, war and peace, marriage, capital punishment, and the whole range of human life questions. The Church seems to have set aside its previous concern for its earthly power and used its spiritual authority to speak clearly in a way previously seen only by Bishop Wilburforce and the other English and American Protestant opponents of slavery prior to 1865.

Continuity: Anglicans can make plausible arguments about the validity of their orders and the merits of "the via media" as the best hope for healing Christian divisions. However, when you go to Rome this authenticity is never in doubt because we know that the Great dome of St. Peter's is not an accident. It is actually where St. Peter lived, died, and is buried. The archeology on these points is actually rather new and fascinating in itself as a subject. To visit Rome is to see why the hymn tune that calls the church a "scornful

wonder" is so apt. St. Peter's is awesome. It is larger than life and its interior so vast as to be impersonal and forbidding. And yet off in the corner is the *Pieta*. Michelangelo's masterpiece is both magnificent and a reminder of the reality of Christ's mission. One is reminded of Sir John Betjeman's Christmas poem that ends with the lines "that Jesus Christ died

in Palestine but lives today in bread and wine." If one accepts Betjeman's affirmation of the Real Presence, then the Eucharist becomes central to what we as Christians do in our liturgy. While Evensong and Morning Prayer can be quite spiritually filling, they complement the Eucharist as the remembrance of the original heavenly banquet during the Passover nearly 2000 years ago. The Eucharist that we observe is a reminder of God's love for us and His wish for sinners to be reconciled unto Himself. If the ancient creeds mean anything to us today, it is because they are an expression of the continuity explicit in the meaning of the phrase Catholic faith-- "the faith believed by all people, at all times, and in all places."

Hence my progress was back to Rome despite the scorn that one can easily heap on it. Our Lord has vested His Church with the "means of grace and the hope for glory" to feed our souls and nurture our conscience to right action. *The Book of Common Prayer* spiritually formed

me and its practices and beautiful phrases are still a part of my private prayers and devotions. The Anglican Use offers a unique way to mix the key elements of two religious traditions. Our mission as a personal parish is to share that unique heritage not only with each other but also with the world around us. Lest we forget, "in thy service is perfect freedom."

JOE BLAKE

Some wag said, "You can take the Boy out of the Catholic Church, but you can't take the Catholic Church out of the boy." Even the Catholic formation received in Shaker Heights manages to stick.

We invite others to share their conversion stories in these columns.

EDITOR

WHEN a calendar year comes to an end, we feel cheated. Nothing in fact has been ended, nothing rounded off and finished. The year is not a piece of work completed and done; we cannot hold on to, or possess, what it has accomplished. We have learnt many things, but all our learning seems still to lie before us. We have enjoyed many things, but our happiness has yet to be earned. We have served God - how little - and we have still to find out what the service of God truly is, and who the God truly is whom we serve. Yet in every moment while time thus bafflingly slips from us, we are in the hands of him who is eternal and changes not. Our Christ, the Christ we offer up here, the Christ on whom

we feed here, the Christ whose body we are here, is eternal God as well as changeable man. Our grasp of eternity is small, but eternity grasps, fills and uses us. For we are the body of an eternal Christ.

AUSTIN FARRER

"The Crown of the Year"

Saint Theresa's Convent Chapel, 10 St Theresa Avenue in West Roxbury. Parking available.

North and Mass Pike. Take Route 128 South to Route 109 East towards Dedham. Route 109 ends at the VFW Parkway and becomes Spring Street which leads to St Theresa's Church.

South. Take Route 128 to Route 1A North at Dedham and continue on Route 1 to Spring Street and turn right onto Spring Street which leads to the Church.

Dorchester and Mattapan. Take River Street to Cummins Highway to Washington Street, south to LaGrange Street, and west (right) on LaGrange to Landseer Street and into St Theresa's parking lot.

Brookline. Take VFW Parkway to LaGrange Street, turn left onto LaGrange into West Roxbury. Cross Centre Street and turn right on Landseer Street and into the Church lot.

MBTA Orange Line to Forest Hills. Then take the #35 (Dedham Mall) bus, which has the most frequent service. Routes 36, 37, and 38 also stop in front of St Theresa's Church.

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius,

The Revd. Richard Sterling Bradford, Chaplain

worshipping at

Saint Theresa Convent Chapel

10 St. Theresa Ave.

West Roxbury, Mass.

Rectory: 192 Foster Street, Brighton, MA 02135-4620

Tel/Fax: (617) 787-0553

Web: <http://www.locutor.net>

Sundays 10:30am. Sung Mass, followed by coffee and fellowship in the convent solarium.

Mon. Jan 1, Feast of the Holy Name: Mass at 10:30am

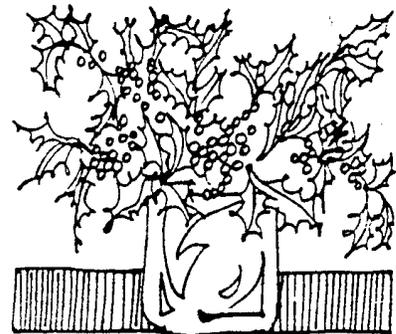
Sun. Jan 7, Feast of the Epiphany Solemn Mass at 10:30am

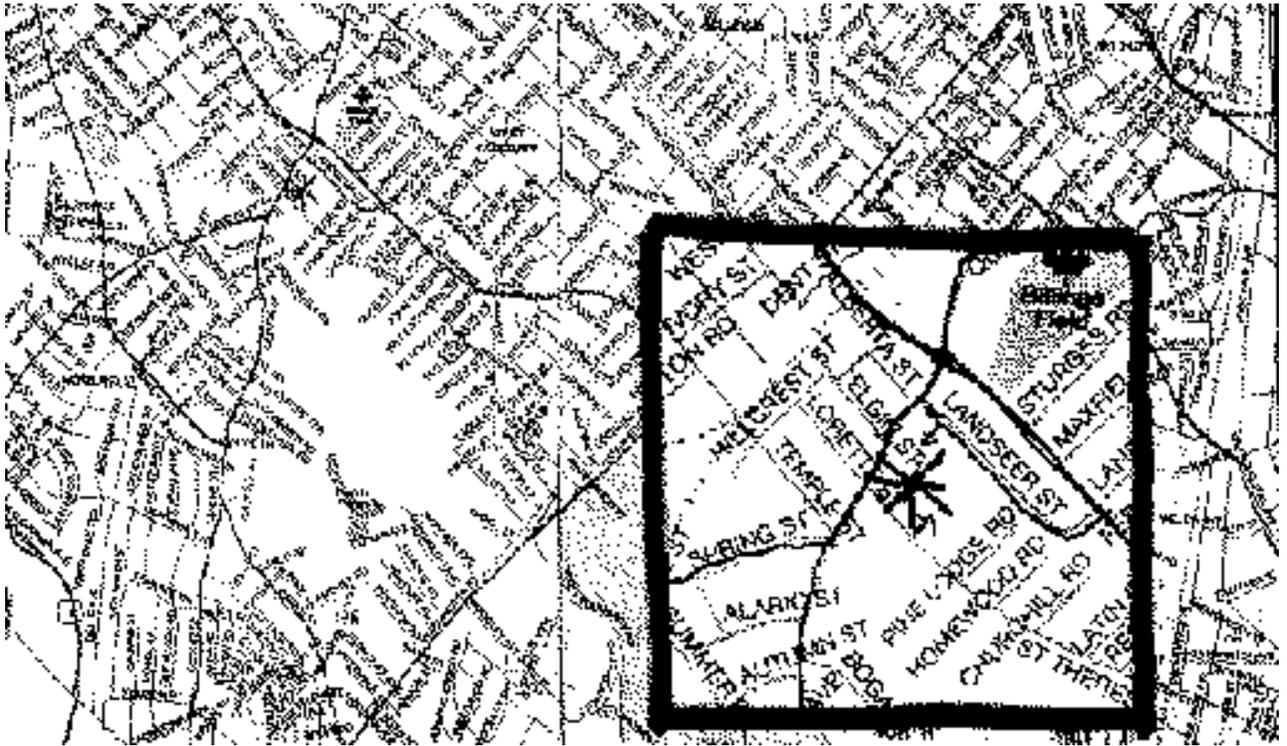
Future Dates

Fri. Feb 2, Candlemas, Mass at 7:30pm

Wed, Feb 28, Ash Wednesday, Mass at 7:30pm

May 4-6, Spring Parish Retreat, St. Benedict Abbey, Still River, Fr. Romanus Cessario, OP, conductor.





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West Roxbury, MA 02132

