
✠ Contra Mundum ✠

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

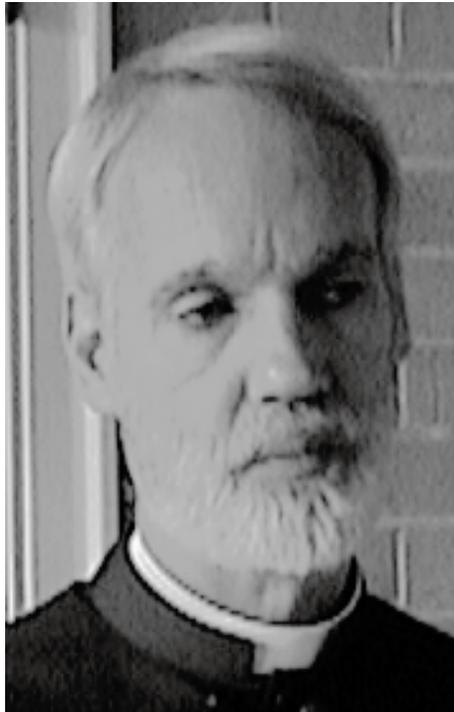
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NOTES FROM THE CHAPLAIN

ON Advent Sunday we begin a new liturgical year, and the gospel readings will be taken primarily from St. Matthew. Matthew's gospel begins with "the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." (1:1) And it is a remarkable thing that, whereas most people (and most biographers) mention only the honorable ancestors of their heroes, Matthew prefaces the gospel good news with a laundry list of all the unsavory skeletons in the closet of Christ's human family.

To be sure, St. Matthew is careful to tell us that this is Joseph's genealogy, and that Joseph is not the father of Our Lord. But first century hearers of the gospel were more ready to accept the divinity of Christ at the expense of His humanity, and so Matthew was anxious to see the Saviour of the world, miraculously conceived as He was, firmly in the context of the human history and frailty of a particular racial group.

And what frailty! To begin with brief mention of the women in the lineage: Tamar was incestuous, the namesake of this Rahab was a harlot, Ruth was an alien, and Bathsheba committed adultery. This is the stuff of a steamy novel!



Why would Christ be identified as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham? St. Matthew's Greek world would have nothing but contempt for a polygamous Mesopotamian sheikh whose religious and social beliefs were dictated by superstition and fertility rites. And then there is King David, whose strong passions, grief, and penitence, make him a very approachable human being. He loved greatly, but he also sinned greatly. So why connect the ancestry of Christ to this man, and especially when we remember that it is not even a blood line St. Matthew's genealogy is establishing. What is the point of it all?

The reason is that over a period of two thousand years, Almighty God was working His purpose out through a particular people "Abraham's seed"

who throughout history uniquely persevered as no other racial group, in its refusal to be assimilated by other cultures or religions, and which has thrived both spiritually and materially, even after suffering time and again bitter persecutions. The only explanation for a genealogical linking of Jesus with Abraham and David is that in all of them Almighty God was reversing the expected by His mighty arm.

Abraham and Sarah were a childless old couple, and when their son comes along, do you know what Isaac means? "A good joke." David was the youngest of eight sons, and not even from the same tribe as King Saul. Yet he is chosen king in another one of those unexpected interferences of Almighty God. You can read, and really must read, the whole story of Abraham and David as the reversal of the expected. God was preparing creation for the coming of Christ, Who is heir to a specific history, and heir also to the prophets who interpreted that history.

Christ is in Himself that purpose for which Abraham was called, for which Moses lived, for which David reigned, and for which the prophets suffered. As the Catechism says, the Bible is a single book about Jesus Christ. (§102). In Advent we are especially reminded that Christ is the Word of God spoken by God to the prophets, priests, and kings, in their generations, until, at Bethlehem, David's city, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14)

FATHER BRADFORD

Saint of the Month



St. John of Damascus
(John Damascene)
c. 657-c. 749

Feast Day 4 December

As the Islamic middle-eastern world boils once again we may recall St. John of Damascus, whose entire life was spent under Muslim rule. His father, Mansur, the principal representative of the minority Christian community in Damascus, and an important official under the rule of the Saracen caliph, enjoyed the protection of the government. He was able to see to the excellent education of his children, procuring for

them a learned Sicilian tutor, Cosmas, for whose liberation as a slave captive he paid a large sum of money.

Mansur's son John succeeded him as chief of revenue under the caliph, but in 716 became a monk, and later a priest, at the abbey of St. Sabas near Jerusalem. There he was to write prolifically and emerged as a highly influential theologian of his time. His works had immense influence for centuries both in the East and West. He is credited with summarizing the teaching of the Greek Fathers on the principal mysteries of the Faith, including the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Assumption, the sinlessness of the Blessed Virgin, and the Real Presence, among others.

At the end of the 7th century a movement began to trouble the Greek Church. Partly it arose from the Monophysite heresy, which minimized the human side of the Incarnation; from the Manicheans, who taught that all matter was evil; and probably from Islam as well, which abhorred pictures of anything: this was the Iconoclastic Controversy. The iconoclasts' leader, the Emperor Leo III (717-741), believed that the use of icons was the chief obstacle to the conversion of Jews and Moslems. He published an edict in 726 declaring that all images were idols that must be destroyed.

Though the veneration of icons and images had indeed become excessive and in many circumstances amounted in fact to idolatry, the veneration of icons had been practiced from the earliest days of the Church, and by no means could be understood to be idolatrous everywhere. John of Damascus defended the traditionalist side, thereby allying himself

with the Bishop of Rome, Gregory III.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem had ordained John a priest by the time the Iconoclasts really got going. At the pseudo-synod of Constantinople in 754, under the Iconoclast's domination, those who opposed were personally anathematized by name. The Iconoclasts were particularly violent against John, reserving for him their greatest blast, because he was beyond their reach in a country ruled by Moslems. They proclaimed him a "cursed favorer of Saracens", a "traitorous worshipper of images", a "wronger of Jesus Christ", a "teacher of impiety", and a "bad interpreter of the Scriptures". At the emperor's command his name was written "Manzer" (Manzeros, a bastard). But the Seventh General Council of Nicea (787) made ample amends for the insults of his enemies, and Theophanes, writing in 813, tells us that he was surnamed Chrysorroas (golden stream) by his friends on account of his oratorical gifts. In the pontificate of Leo XIII (in 1890) he was enrolled among the doctors of the Church.

St. John of Damascus was an almost exact contemporary of the Venerable Bede, and, like him, was both a monk and an assiduous writer.

Short Notes

Inquirers' Classes for adults are underway and meeting on Fridays at St. Theresa's Church at 1:00pm. Other times are also available.

The annual Advent/Christmas concert in St. Theresa of Ávila Church is on Sunday December 16th at 4:00pm. This concert features

various choirs, and combinations of instruments and handbells. It is always well attended.

Our thanks to Father George Greenway, who was our celebrant and preacher at Mass on Sunday, November 4th. Fr. Greenway is a priest of the Diocese of Springfield, and a good friend of our congregation.

Please return your filled-in pledge card if you have not already done so. This will greatly assist us in preparing our parish program for the new year. Cards were mailed to parishioners in mid-November. Extras may be obtained from the parish treasurer, Bruce Rand.

Christmas flower envelopes are available for your contributions towards the decoration of the chapel for the Holy Season. Please return all donations to the parish by December 17th so that memorials and thanksgivings may be included in the Christmas service leaflet. Many thanks.

THE BRITISH MARTYRS

OVER the years 200 men and women have been beatified for their heroic witness to the Catholic Faith in the British Isles during and after the Protestant Reformation. Two famous martyrs, SS. John Fisher and Thomas More, were beatified in 1886 and canonized in 1935. Their feast day is June 22nd. On October 25, 1970, Pope Paul VI canonized Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. Their commemoration is October 25 in the calendar. Some of these, such as Edmund Campion and Robert

Southwell, may be more than just names to us, but others are not familiar to many of us. Over the next months *Contra Mundum* will present brief sketches of some of the saints and blessed from the British Isles whose lives and deaths paved the way for future conversions and Catholic witness among English-speaking people worldwide. These sketches are taken from issues of the monthly devotional guide *Magnificat*, and are used by permission.

SAINT ALEXANDER BRIANT *Religious, Priest, and Martyr* (1556-1581)

Saint Alexander Briant was the third martyr to die for the faith in England on December 1, 1581, together with Saint Edmund Campion and the diocesan priest Ralph Sherwin. Born in Somerset, Alexander studied at Oxford and Douai, where he was ordained a priest in 1578. Returning to England, he engaged in priestly ministry in his native shire until captured by priest hunters and imprisoned in the Tower to be tortured and racked. From prison, Alexander wrote to the English Jesuits asking for admission to the Society, and they accepted him. At his trial in Westminster Hall, a minister snatched from him a small cross he was holding. Alexander told him, "You may tear it from my hands, but you cannot tear it from my heart. I shall die for him who first died for me." Charged with having taken an oath against the queen's life in Rome and in Rheims (he had never been in either city), Alexander was convicted of treason and condemned to death at Tyburn, rejoicing to have as his companions Saints Edmund Campion and Ralph Sherwin.

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BLESSED WILLIAM PATENSON

Priest and Martyr (†1592)

Father William Patenson was arrested shortly after saying Mass on the third Sunday of Advent in December 1591 at the home of a Catholic couple in Clerkenwell, England. His last night was spent in a cell with convicted felons, six of whom he led to repentance and to conversion to the Catholic faith, which they publicly professed at their executions.

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CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Advent I

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

SOUNDING through the opening prayer of the Christian year is the trumpet call of the Last Judgement. The collect shows the immediate response of the Christian soul to this challenge. Three emotions are aroused by the solemn warning of judgement to come.

First there is the ardent desire to be ready to meet the Judge. Preparation must be made in the only way possible, by casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light. We no longer wish to appear as Black Knights, wearing the uniform of the Prince of Darkness,

but in shining brightness as followers of the Prince of Light, wearing the truly Christian armour, the whole armour of God, which St. Paul describes so effectively in the last chapter of Ephesians.

Darkness and light cannot exist together: there is no possibility of 'peaceful co-existence' here. No doubt we often act as if there were, and we become so insensitive to the contradiction that we cannot always distinguish clearly the one from the other. But the time is coming when there can be no mistake.

Several religions, such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism have held that the peculiarity of our present existence lies in the fact that in it primeval darkness and primeval light—the essential bad and the essential good—have become intermingled. Human life belongs wholly neither to the one nor to the other, but is a kind of smudge.

Christ taught that the difference between the two qualities was fundamental and should always be decipherable. At any rate, there would come a day when confusion would be no longer possible. Bad and good would be for ever separated; darkness would flee before the dawn of light; the goats would go to the left hand and the sheep to the right. For that day we long and prepare. However conscious of its own unworthiness, the Christian soul still longs for the appearance of the Master.

The result of this ardent desire is a sense of urgency. We cannot delay our preparation. Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the Son, but the Father. If we cannot tell when he will come, then we must be constantly ready. Like the Wise Virgins,

we must keep our lamps always trimmed.

That, in fact, is the reason for our presence in this world, that we may prepare ourselves for eternal happiness with him. We are given the opportunity to become like him 'now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son came to visit us in great humility.' Having been the agent of his Father in creation and having placed us in these conditions, the Son later joined us in them in order to help us put right what we had spoilt.

Here then is our opportunity. We must show ourselves on his side, put on his uniform, for all the world to see. Even the Jewish prophets had tried to nerve their people to make a decided choice. 'I put before thee two ways: light and darkness, good and evil, life and death: therefore choose life.' We are fortunate in having had the life of the Son of Man in the condition of his humility lived out before our eyes. This has made the distinction clear. There may be many doubtful questions still, but in the main the difference between right and wrong stands out unmistakable. All the goodness in heaven and earth is written in his face. It is that which here and now we choose.

To the desire to be ready and to the sense of urgency is added the note of joyful expectation. 'The last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty.' That will be a day of great triumph for his followers. Our fear of judgement is lost in our anticipation of final victory.

The collect evidently has behind it the language of St. Paul in Thessalonians where he pictures the scene at God's last appearing: the

dead raised from their graves in their spiritual bodies and the living changed, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' from material to spiritual, so that all alike can be caught up to meet him in the air. No doubt this is picture writing. But the final end of the material world and its passage into the eternal sphere imply something of the kind. In what better language could this ultimate translation be described?

In any case here is the supreme hope held out to every Christian: that with Christ at his appearing we may rise to the life immortal. That is our glad expectancy; that is the event for which we have to make ready; that is what we must on no account miss. There is the challenge and, we hope, the response of Advent-tide.

REFLECTIONS ON THE COLLECTS
J.W.C. WAND

ADVENT

OUR journey sets out from God in our creation, and returns to God at the final judgement. As the bird rises from the earth to fly, and must some time return to the earth from which it rose; so God sends us forth to fly, and we must fall back into the hands of God at last. But God does not wait for the failure of our power and the expiry of our days to drop us back into his lap. He goes himself to meet us and everywhere confronts us. Where is the countenance which we must finally look in the eyes, and not be able to turn away our head? It smiles up at Mary from the cradle, it calls Peter from the nets, it looks on him with grief when he has denied his master. Our judge meets us at every step of our way, with forgiveness on his lips and

succour in his hands. He offers us these things while there is yet time. Every day opportunity shortens, our scope for learning our Redeemer's love is narrowed by twenty-four hours, and we come nearer to the end of our journey, when we shall fall into the hands of the living God, and touch the heart of the devouring fire.

"THE CROWN OF THE YEAR"

AUSTIN FARRER



FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 2, 2001

Litany in Procession

Solemn Mass & Sermon

10:30am



Saturday, December 8, 2001

Immaculate Conception of

the Blessed Virgin Mary

Solemn Mass & Sermon

9:00am

Holy Day of Obligation



Christmas Schedule

Christmas Eve

Procession, Blessing of the Creche

Solemn Mass of Christmas

8:30pm

Christmas Day

Low Mass & Sermon

10:30am

Sunday, December 30th

The Holy Family

Sunday in the Octave of Christmas

Solemn Mass at 10:30am

A Procession with Carols

for Christmas

St. Theresa of Ávila Church

5:00pm

A reception follows the service

Tuesday, January 1st

Mary, Mother of God

Octave of Christmas

Solemn Mass at 10:30am

Holy Day of Obligation

**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. Adult Christian Education two Sundays a month.

December 9 & 16, Anglicanism: Doctrine in the Church of England.

January 13 & 27, Comparative Religion: Paganism

February 10 History: The Medieval Church.

February 24, History: Bob Alpert: Martin Luther.

March 10 & 17, Doctrine: Scholastic Theology

April 14 & 28, Evangelism: Renewal Movements in the Church

May 12 & 26, Christian Life: Educating Children

June 9 & 23, Worship and Liturgy: The History of the Divine Office.

July 14 & 28, Old Testament: The Prophets.

August 11 & 25, New Testament: The Pauline Epistles

St. Theresa Church and Convent
Chapel, West Roxbury, MA 02132
Pine Lodge Road (off St. Theresa
Avenue)

Park either in the church parking lot or on Pine
Lodge Road. The side door of the convent is
open during the time of our services.

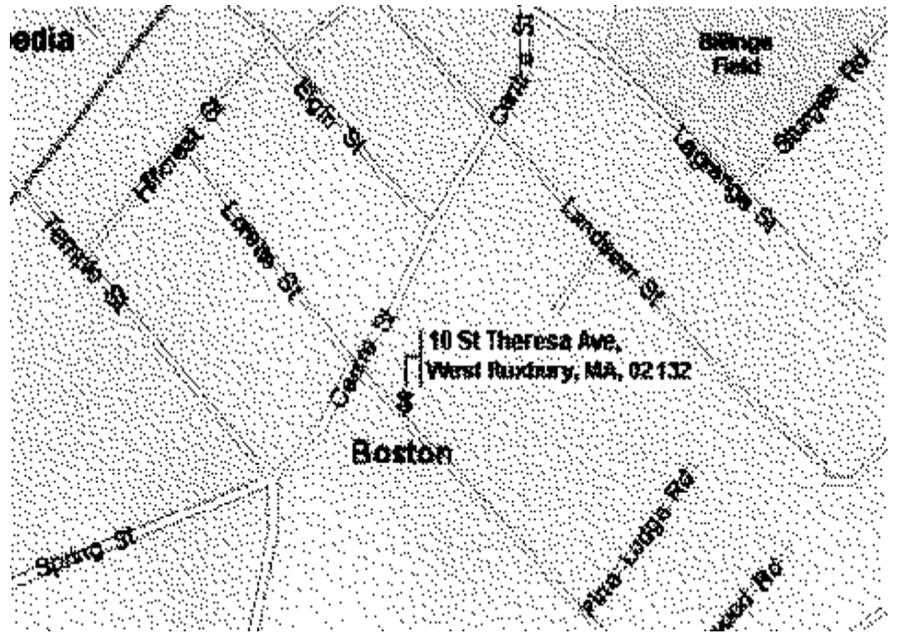
Directions by Car: *From the North:* Route
128 to Route 109, which becomes Spring Street
in West Roxbury. Spring Street ends at a
traffic light at Centre Street in sight of the
church. At this light bear left onto Centre St.
and immediately turn right at the next light
onto St. Theresa Ave.

From the South: Route 1 north through
Dedham to Spring Street. Turn right onto
Spring Street then follow the directions above.

From Dorchester and Mattapan: Cummins
Highway to Belgrade Avenue to Centre Street
left on St. Theresa Ave.

From Boston: VFW Parkway to LaGrange
Street. Turn left onto LaGrange Street, crossing
Centre Street and turn right onto Landseer
Street. Turn left into the church parking lot.

Directions by Public Transportation: *Orange line*
to Forest Hills terminal. Bus to West Roxbury.
#35 bus to Dedham Mall. #36, #37, and #38
also stop at St. Theresa's. *Commuter train* to
West Roxbury Station is a short walk to St.
Theresa's. Departs from South Station, but
no Sunday service is available.



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10 St. Theresa Avenue
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