



The Shepherd's Staff

*Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States*

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Saint Jude's Intercessory Prayer Group

Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6.18)

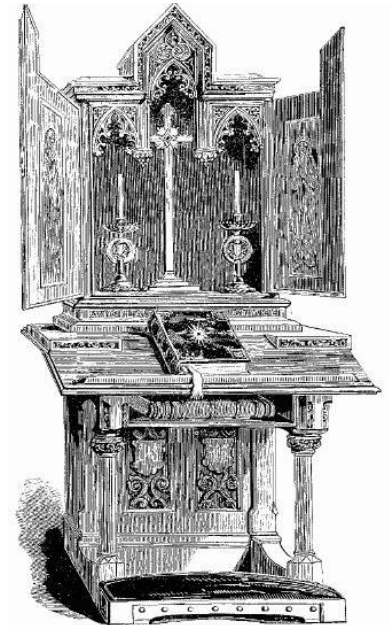
If the year 2020 has proved anything, it is that we all need to pray more and worry less, *to dread nothing but the loss of thee, and to cast all our care on thee, who carest for us* [BCP. Family Prayer]. More especially ought we to pray for our brothers and sisters in their trials and temptations. So, I would like us to begin 2021 with a New Year's Resolution to use our prayer resources more efficiently and participate in a Diocesan-wide Prayer Group. Mrs. Debra Ponec has volunteered to coordinate this new prayer group which will be intercessory in nature.

We will call our group ***Saint Jude's Intercessory Prayer Group***. It will work like this. During any calendar month, send the names of those for whom you wish prayers offered by other members of the group to Mrs. Ponec and she will publish a list weekly to the clergy and the laity who wish to be part of the group. Keep your requests simple, *Efrem RIP* or *Michael a priest (or Michael+)* or *+Robert RIP*. [Note James+ denotes a priest and +Mark denotes a bishop] Try not to send long lists and overwhelm Mrs. Ponec. And at the end of every calendar month, a reset takes place, and we all need to resubmit our prayer requests.

Please understand that Saint Jude's Intercessory Prayer Group is not meant to burden our parish clergymen [they have enough to do and need our prayers] but to give us (especially the laity) a chance to pray with and for each other. I think we will find that praying together will bring us closer together.

Moreover, on the date of their anniversary of ordination to the diaconate, priesthood or episcopate, Mrs. Ponec will send a short email to everyone to remember those clergymen in their prayers. *So, all bishops, priests and deacons, please send me your dates of ordination and I will pass them along.*

If you wish to participate, Mrs. Ponec's email is ponec@msn.com. Just let her know and she will put your name on her master distribution list. Thank you, all.



News from Saint Joseph's Seminary

Starting January 5th 2021, the following classes will begin.

1. **Fourth Semester Biblical Greek**, Fridays at 11:00 a.m. Pacific Time, starting January 8 (credit or audit)
2. **Theology Made Simple**, Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time, from January 5th to March 16th which will be a ten-session mixed class for postulants, clergy, and laity. (audit)
3. **A Deacon's Practicum**, Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time, from April 13 to June 15 offered for all current deacons and postulants who are considering ordination in the next two years. (audit)
[If you are serious about seeking ordination, the Council of Bishops strongly urges you to take this class. It is not particularly rigorous, but covers material necessary for taking that next step]
4. An intensive class (two semesters compressed into one) on The **Theology of the Seven Oecumenical Councils**, Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m., Pacific Time beginning January 5th. (credit or audit) This class will be taped for interested persons cleared by the instructor.

Starting in September 2021, three classes will be offered. Bishop Blair Schultz will teach an expanded yearlong class in the Book of Common Prayer. Archbishop Upham will teach Ecclesiology in the Fall and Ecclesiastical Polity in the Spring (2022). And Bishop Ashman will teach Greek Five and Six.

2021 Ordo Kalendars – Still Available

The 2021 Ordo Kalendars have been prepared, printed and are available for immediate purchase. The Ordo Kalendar conforms to the 1928 Prayer Book and both the American and Anglican Missals. The Ordo Kalendar is in full color and edited for Church use by Father Matthew Weber of Saint Ann's Chapel in Palo Alto. Direct inquiries to Mrs. Nona Gourley (209) 862-2582 or email: order1928bcpcalendar@gmail.com. Ordo Kalendars are not only a necessity for every sacristy but good advertising for visitors. Mail them to shut-ins. Have them available in the narthex. Give them away. They are the cheapest advertising I know.

Did you Know...

...that the Feast of the Epiphany is of ancient origin and it used to mean a lot more than it currently does - to a whole lot more people. The Epiphany, along with the Resurrection (Easter) and Pentecost (Whitsunday),

have traditionally marked the three high points of Our Lord's ministry here on earth. The Epiphany more accurately teaches the purpose of Jesus' Incarnation or coming into the world than the story of the manger as touching and charming as it may be. The second, Jesus' Resurrection or His defeat of sin and death is the keystone of our religion and our hope for any future whatsoever. The third, Pentecost is Jesus' legacy, the establishment of His Church, which carries on the work His Kingdom. Do not think the third, Whitsunday or the Descent of the Holy Ghost



upon the Apostles, an exception. Indeed, Christ had ascended from earth into heaven 10 days before. But when He sent the Holy Ghost to fall upon the disciples and begin the active ministry of His Church, He was perfecting and ensuring the survival of that which He had begun at his Epiphany or coming into the world.

Way to Go! - Saint Luke's Redding



Left to right: Deacon Paul Shepard, Deacon Ben Lawrence, Canon Scott Mitchell



Saint Luke's, Advent IV, Ready for the Feast of the Nativity

The Babe

You were born in a delivery room, or at home or in a taxi, mother, father, doctor or midwife present: a peaceful though terrifying change from nine months' life in darkness, then... Light! Faces! Unfamiliar sights! Voices! Huge eyes! Poking, prodding, and ouch! What is that loud wailing? Oh, it's me! I'm crying. I've been born.

Jesus' birth was much the same. The hushed voices of his parents were the only human sounds amid bleatings and mooings of a barn. The smells were strong. What did He know? this Ancient, Eternal Son of God without beginning, made flesh, a small baby man. The Babe lay in a food trough, hay crunching under His wrappings. The little king looked up at the strange world He had created, and was now part of, subject to its laws, part of a Covenant people, born to be their one true sacrifice, born to die.

He must have been a perfect baby. Of course, He wet, He hungered, He feared, needed His parents—the Mother so much a part of Him, He a part of her, and this step-father caring for his Infant Heir; Heir to the line of the Kings, a thousand-years' descendant from David. Immediately the world changed around Him. Shepherds heard wonderful news from the sky, angels singing praises to God for the Savior born in Bethlehem. They left their flocks and ran to be His witnesses.

A new light appeared in the heavens as men of wisdom in the East watched the heavenly signs unfold. They knew what it meant: a star out of Jacob who would rule the world. They packed precious gifts and mounted their camels. From that night to this, the Babe is celebrated, longed for, rejoiced in, sung about, fashioned in plaster, paint, dolls and our imagination. That star hangs over towns and nativity scenes, marking the magi's way to Him who must be worshipped.

Remarkably, his birthplace was so humble; the King of the world is born in a barn. Now great cathedrals rise in cities where high altars soar and giant organs trumpet through the night the familiar music of Christmas. We would all give Him our home, our bed, were He to ask it. He is asking us to give him—not our sleeping quarters: somewhere else. He wants to be born in our hearts. The wonder of Christmas calls us back through years, to travel in our hearts to when we believed because, well just because we believed. He wants to be born in our hearts.

No room—not at the little inn. He wants to be born in our hearts. We say I invite Jesus into my heart. Some say we have to say that to get a key to heaven. Then what? He wants to be born in our hearts. Jesus, the Babe, born for all mankind, seeks a place to dwell that was once cold and dark. I call it "my heart." It isn't any good to me alone. It was made for Him. There isn't room anywhere else. Though it be the lowest and dirtiest place on earth, the King of Kings will make it His palace. May He be born in me. And be born in you.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He shrouded Himself in human flesh, God incarnate, a complete man, a newborn babe, still powerful to create galaxies, yet powerless to feed Himself. He needed us, though He created us and will be our Judge. Christmas, feast of new beginnings, offers us this hope: that we can start again, with new faith and great hope, that we might never fall so low again.

A new star shines in the sky. Angels sing in the heavens. A Babe cries out in the night from a barn in old Bethlehem. Here in the 21st century, with all our toys, with our noses pressed against store windows, plentiful room to come in and buy... We must step back. We've just been offered eternity. He wants to be born in our hearts. Welcome Lord Jesus, God made man, born in us Christmas Eve, giving us new lives. The world has nothing we need. You have all that we want. You want to be born in our hearts.

You are born tonight. You are here. Welcome baby king.

+PFH

Anglican Church Women Notes

As I look back on 2020, I find bright days among all the gloom. I am privileged to live in a rural area, with acres of forest and mountains on our doorstep, so social distancing is not a hardship. I know I would feel quite different if I lived in a small apartment in the center of a city. The enforced isolation gave time for reflection on the incredible complexity of God's creation, time to watch the changing seasons, the birds and animals, the flowers, and trees. How can anyone deny that there is an all-powerful, loving God? Isolation also brought togetherness, with our wonderful clergy bringing Morning and Evening Prayer and even Mass through the Internet. Again, I am privileged to be able to attend Mass in person as our little church has been able to be open through much of the pandemic. There are advantages to having a very small congregation!

Already there is some light at the end of the tunnel! Churches are beginning to open again, and we look forward to having our Synod in Chico this spring. It is time to think about items for the ACW Drawings, and also for 'Preserving the Priesthood' (jams, jellies, pickles, chutneys, or anything you can fit in a jar!) ACW Dues notices will be going out shortly, as will the requests for Lenten Mite Boxes. Please fill out the forms and return them in a timely fashion. ACW Dues are mandatory for every parish, even if there is no active ACW chapter, and the Lenten Mite Boxes are a vital source of revenue for student support at St. Joseph of Arimathea Seminary. Ash Wednesday, when the boxes should be distributed, is on February 17th.

Gillian Golden, ACW Western States President

Something to Think About

A cynical churchman once emailed his rector and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now, and in all that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I cannot remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time going to church at all." His rector emailed back, "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work: to feed Christ's flock in Word and Sacrament. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead and unable to feed my flock. Likewise, if we do not go to church for nourishment, we would be spiritually dead today!"

The Final Word

The most frequent comment of those who question or deny the Christian reality that God is love frequently say if God is love how can He allow the bloodshed of history, the Holocaust, the Twin Towers attacks, the World Wars, or the many personal tragedies that touch all of us? In this Epiphany season, when the divinity of Our Lord is manifest, the question is even more important: why does God allow evil? The answer is, of course, freedom. It is only by granting us freedom that we can participate in the divine life, and be able to love. But freedom allows choice and thus the possibility of evil.

The longer we live, the more we experience our fallen world. T.S. Eliot writes in his poem, Four Quartets, that right action is freedom. The more we choose the will of God, and thus choose to love, the freer we are. The opposite is also true. Dante writes in Inferno in The Divine Comedy that the bottom of Hell is a tight well, the narrow circle of self. Yet to move beyond the depression of despair and be realistic we must not only accept the reality of evil, but also see beyond it that the Kingdom of God has come, and will come. We see that love will triumph or, as the Book of Revelation says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The Atonement, the at-one-ment of Christ, at one with us in our sufferings and death, through His sacrifice, is the only thing that makes sense. Look at the Cross. The crucifixion reveals the cost and the victory of love. The Mass is a representation of this sacrifice, yet as we offer ourselves in union with His Passion in every Mass, we can never turn back. We never cease our participation in the divine life, to love through and beyond tragedy.

+RSM