



The Shepherd's Staff

*Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States*

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The Thirtieth Synod of the Diocese of the Western States

The Synod began with a Quiet Day on Tuesday April 20th at Saint Augustine of Canterbury Church in Chico CA. Father David LaBarbera, Deacon Glenn Karcher, Father Michael Mautner and Deacon Brian Faith lead us in various offices and the Eucharist. Bishop Elect Mitchell gave the Morning Meditation, Archbishop Upham gave the Afternoon Meditation and Bishop Ashman read from the Parables of Saint Luke's Gospel. Participants came in and out, prayed, and listened. Lunch was provided by Saint Augustine's and there was abundant time for silent meditation in the church and in the beautiful nearby parks.



On Wednesday, April 21st, Bishop Hansen celebrated the Eucharist assisted by Father Ben Brown (St. Francis, Livermore) The Standing Committee met at 10:00 a.m. and interviewed five candidates, Deacon Ron Reno (St. John's, Omaha), Deacon Franz Longworth (St. Peter's, Oakland), Mr. Jerry Jewett (Our Saviour and the Holy Apostles, Los Angeles), Mr. Mark Talley (St. Augustine's, Chico), and Deacon Glenn Karcher (St. Ann's, Palo Alto). Two candidates were unable to attend. Deacon Michael Ruffino (St. Chad's, Colorado Springs) underwent emergency surgery two weeks ago (He is recovering nicely) and Mr. Ron Smith (St. David of Wales, San Rafael) had his car die on Interstate 5 on his way to Synod. The committee expressed its confidence in all the candidates and (Deo volente) approved the ordinations of Mr. Longworth and Mr. Karcher later this year.

At 1:00 p.m., the Board of Directors met and (like a parish vestry) considered the temporal affairs of the Diocese. A budget was passed, the Chancellor, Canon Richard McNeely (St. Thomas, San Francisco) reported there were no legal issues pending at this time. The committee also discussed the conversion Holy Trinity Church in Sacramento into a preaching station and the disposition of its surviving assets. And before the closing prayer and benediction, it was announced that the 2022 Synod will be held at Saint Luke's, Redding CA.

From 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., the ACW Reception was held in Canon Reed Hall with refreshments provided the Anglican Church Women, followed by the Bishops' Auction (raising \$2,091) for benefit of the clergy, especially those in need to attend Synod. Following the reception, Synod participants enjoyed their dinners at the many restaurants in downtown Chico.



On Thursday morning, April 22nd, Archbishop Upham, assisted by Canons Jones (Saint George's, Raleigh NC) and Mitchell and Deacon Ben Lawrence (St. Luke's, Redding CA), celebrated the *Mass of Christ the Eternal High Priest*, and blessed Holy Oils for the use of the Priests of the Diocese.



At 10:00 a.m., Archbishop Upham conducted a workshop on the *History of the Canons of the Church* and how they govern our Parishes, Dioceses and Province. I think a lot of folks were amazed that our Canons are based upon and descend from the Canons of the Church of England in 1789, not from the Protestant Episcopal Church.

At 11:30 a.m., the ACW and Clergy Lunch was held at the Diamond Hotel followed by the Anglican Church Women's Conference while the Clergy walked back to Saint Augustine's for a 1:15 p.m. Clericus during which Mr. Robbie Messer gave a stimulating talk on *Autism Quest*, code for *Accept, Understand, Teach, Inspire, Support and Motivate*.



Evening Prayer was read by Deacons Lawrence and Karcher. Dinner was enjoyed again at various Chico eateries.



On Friday April 23, the Feast of Saint George, Morning Prayer was read by the Very Reverend David Napier, assisted by Father Larry Shaddix. At the conclusion of Morning Prayer, the Bishop Ordinary announced that Father Napier has been elevated to Dean of Saint Joseph's Seminary Chapel. The Bishop also noted the fine work that Dean Napier and Father Larry Shaddix have done at the Saint Joseph's Seminary Chapel.

When registration of the voting delegates was complete and the Quorum Call was taken, the Synod Business Meeting was opened with a prayer by Archbishop Upham. Saint David of Wales parish in San Rafael CA was formally admitted to the Diocese. Elections were held for a Coadjutor Bishop and a Suffragan Bishop. Bishop Peter Hansen was elected Coadjutor Bishop and Canon Scott Mitchell was elected Suffragan Bishop – and we sang a *Te Deum* when the results were announced. [*Note A Suffragan Bishop is an Assisting Bishop, as is a Coadjutor, except that a Coadjutor Bishop has right of succession. Moreover, it should be noted that Bishop Mitchell is needed since our new Coadjutor was appointed Episcopal Visitor by the Council of Bishops to the Diocese of the Southwestern States.] Finally, a modification to the Canons regarding Diocesan boundaries (in de facto effect since 1995) was voted on and approved. This change merely acknowledged the geographical changes that occurred when the Diocese of the Southwestern States was formed in 1995.

Then followed the regular business meeting: the reading of minutes, treasurer's report, election of officers and Bishop's appointments, committee reports and addresses by the Bishop Ordinary and the Archbishop. After the Resolutions (Father Britton, Our Saviour, Santa Barbara, and Deacon Reno) the Archbishop dismissed the meeting with a blessing. Then all broke for lunch at local Chico eateries.

At 3:00 p.m., Synod resumed in the Church for the Pontifical Mass and Consecration of Canon Mitchell. Father Matthew Weber was the litanist, Bishop Hanson was the preacher and Canon Charles "Rusty" Dillon (Saint Stephen's, Oakville) read the Testimonials.



The evening saw the Synod Banquet held at Almendra Winery in nearby Durham. It was truly an evening of laughter and fun; and, during the festivities,



Father Dan Canda (St. James, Denver) was a superb master of ceremonies for the ACW drawing.

On Saturday, April 24, Bishop Mitchell, assisted by Deacon Lawrence and the Deacon's son Augie celebrated his first Eucharist as a Bishop. It was gratifying to see the Church almost as full as it was during the Pontifical Mass and Consecration the day before.



Taken from Bishop Hansen's Admonition to Bishop Elect Mitchell

Scott...The episcopate may be a surprise for you. We are men under authority first. Being under the authority of God the Holy Trinity, and then of your Archbishop and Ordinary, you will also be empowered to do God's will. His will is always to benefit us. You will balance your obligation of defending the faith with the care of the wounded. You were the thin blue line. Now, like Christ, you will be stretched on His infinite line across the universe, far thinner than that blue line, and in that line you join His suffering.

Stand where you're assigned, and nothing can defeat you. We are to fear nothing, even death, for the privilege of loving Christ out loud. Live not by lies, but speak the truth in love, salted with the wisdom that will be given you, at need, from above. And love all people. Even when they are dead wrong. Love just the same. You have no idea how much power that brings. The infinite narrow line between our freedom and God's dominion is found in the God-made-man, Jesus Christ. This insoluble problem has been solved by the One who alone could bridge the worlds apart, and as the gate, He opens wide the doors of our freedom. The firmament above and below become one in Him, and in Him, with Him, we join this world with His kingdom. You now are to become a prince in that kingdom, and we welcome you, brother.



Bishop Ashman's 2021 Synod Address

In my 2018 Synod Address, I remarked that the Devil, that old liar, and his ubiquitous minions have done everything in their power to marginalize us, divide us and make us turn around to die in the wilderness, and yet, in spite of it all, we are continuing. The year two thousand and twenty was particularly profitable for the old liar and how he used the ravages of Covid-19 to increase his pressure upon us. Is there a parish among us who has improved their financial stature? Is there a parish among us who has not lost members or found it almost impossible to gain membership? I think not. And yet by God's grace we are continuing. We have used some of the Devil's greatest resources, especially the internet, to strike back. In the depths of despair, our clergy have used the Zoom Platform, YouTube, and Facebook to corporately worship and spread the Gospel.

This unique outreach (unimagined even five years ago) has united us in many wonderful ways, and yet we remain frustrated by Satan's cunning deeds, the greatest being despair! When the old Diocese of Christ the King was born back in 1977, we were full of fight and united in a common cause. Our leader of blessed memory was a towering mosaic figure! He united us and led us out of ECUSA into the wilderness. We stumbled often but still fought the good fight until, when he died, something of that thunderous spirit was lost. Do any of us really believe he would want that to be his epitaph? I don't think so. So here we are, six years later. We are under siege! We are fighting despair! And the Devil is exultant!

So, what is to be done! Go back to the flesh-pots of Egypt? Compromise with the world, the flesh, and the Devil? I remember the night before the 2012 consecrations, when Bishop Morse, recalling the way through the wilderness, again called us to action. He was so frail – and yet so full of spirit. He wanted us to continue! We have crossed Jordan, but the Devil wants us to turn around and go back into the desert and die. So, what is to be done? The answer is simple: we must continue. We must continue as Christ's faithful soldiers and servants! It is all summed up in a petition used by many schools that goes like this: *And the blessing I shall ask, is that God will grant me, to be brave and strong and true!*

If we look at the first Christians, these three adjectives describe them perfectly. Brave doesn't just mean just physical courage rather more precisely it means the moral strength and courage to face danger, fear, or difficulty – oh yes, and despair. For a soldier of Christ, bravery means the courage to do the right and avoid the wrong. Strong means an ardent zeal to show others who Jesus is by what people see in us: kindness, generosity, humility, and a forgiving spirit. True means a steadfast and unflinching loyalty to our Blessed Saviour. Now, this may not sound like a Synod Address but, whatever it sounds like, these are the virtues that will help us to remain in the promised land and not die in the wilderness. These personal qualities must become our Mission Statement!

Now don't misunderstand me! To be brave and strong and true are personal qualities to which all of us must aspire. But there is more. We must evangelize! We must teach our children and raise them in the Faith. We are making plans for a 2022 Bishop Morse Youth Camp. We must use the newly discovered tools of Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube to frustrate Satan, to spread the Gospel and connect our churches. We must tell unchurched who we are, invite them to church and be good neighbors and friends. We must be creative (not foolish) financiers and search for men willing to offer themselves for the sacred ministry. And we need a new wave of volunteers who are willing to give of their time, treasure, and talent in order to fill in the gaps in all of our parishes. And regardless of our challenges, we must not look back. We must send souls to Christ.

Finally, I am beyond grateful for the "stalwart ones" in every home and parish, who never, never, never quit or falter as they continue to give of themselves. They (and **they** know who they are) have sacrificed and worked so hard to help us turn our backs to the desert and turn our faces towards the promised land. No names, just eternal glory! My dear brothers and sisters, may we never forget the heritage that is ours and let us go forward and baptize all nations in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

News from Saint Joseph's Seminary

Two classes are currently finishing up the Spring Semester: *Fourth Semester Biblical Greek* and an intensive class (two semesters compressed into one) on *The Theology of the Seven Oecumenical Councils*.

The 2021 Saint Joseph of Arimathea **Seminary Summer Session** will be held during the last two weeks of July (19th to 30th) on the Zoom platform. Morning Prayer will be read at 9:30 a.m. and lead by various students and clergy. At 10:00 a.m., during the first week Bishop Ashman will guide a *Directed Reading Class*; the second week Bishop Upham will teach *Early Ecclesiology*. After a short break, at 11:15, Bishop Ashman will teach a *Deacon's Practicum* for all current deacons and postulants who are considering ordination in the next two years, even if they have already passed their canonical exams and been cleared by their Standing Committees and (for the priesthood) successfully passed their interview by the Council of Bishops. We will break for Lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. after which Father Dr. Paul Russell will conduct an interactive seminar until 2:15 p.m. Tentatively, the first week will focus on the Holy Trinity and the second week will focus on the Book of Daniel. Each day will close at 3:15 with Evening Prayer read by various students and faculty. Auditors are welcome.

Starting in September 2021, four classes will be offered. Bishop Blair Schultz will teach an expanded yearlong class in *An Analysis of 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 *Biblical Greek Five-Six* and a *First-Year Ecclesiastical Latin class*.

This and That

- We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Bishop Peter Hansen, his parishioners and everyone who helped make our Thirtieth Synod such a wonderful affair, especially Mark Talley. Thanks also to Nona Gourley for her indefatigable organizational skills and our ACW president Gillian Golden.
- Have you and your parishioners been participating in the Saint Jude's Intercessory Prayer Group? It's simple to join and use. During any calendar month, send the names of those for whom you wish prayers offered by other members of the group to Mrs. Deb 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 if possible, Efrem RIP, or Michael a priest (or Michael+) or +Robert RIP. Just send your names to Deb at ponec@msn.com.
- There weren't a lot of us at the Silent Retreat on the first day of Synod but, believe me, it was meaningful to those of us who participated. Think about it and try to attend next year.
- Father Larry Shaddix has been called as the new Rector of Saint Francis of Assisi in Livermore, replacing Father Benjamin Brown who is relocating to Idaho in June but who, nonetheless, remains Secretary of Diocesan Synod.
- From the other Dioceses. Canon Ben Jones has been nominated as Suffragan Bishop for the Diocese of the Atlantic States and (Deo volente) will be elected and consecrated at their Synod from September 14th to 17th at All Saints' Bolingbrook, Illinois. The Diocese of the Southwestern States will meet from May 25th to 27th at Saint George's, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- Remember to support your Anglican Church Women. If you are the only woman in your parish (or if there are just a few of you), help the priest keep your diocesan and provincial dues up to date. I know we are all very busy, but remember that the ACW does so much for our church camps and our seminarians.
- Remember, it does not matter how big or small our parishes are. What counts is how many people we send to our Blessed Saviour. And be a happy church which may not "grow" a parish but visitors, if they encounter a happy church, will be given a glimpse of the Vision of God – and will not forget.
- Please, O please, send me pictures of your parish events. People in other parishes in the Diocese want to know what your parish is doing. It really does make a difference.

A Sermon for the Third Sunday after Easter

[In memory of a good and faithful priest]

Our Epistle reading today from St. Peter's first letter talks about submission. In today's world this word may have some negative implications, as we think this word is a synonym for other words like subjection, or subordination, something being forced on us. Perhaps something like being told to stay at home and shelter.....sound familiar?? But as Christians, submission is voluntary, and in this context, I also get a sense that it is calling us to simplify our lives, to cut out the clutter that we fill our lives with, and find a more humble place to honor God. In this Epistle, St. Peter encourages us to even submit when we are being persecuted, and continue to trust in God, to live such good lives that we prove by our actions that we glorify God. And Peter also encourages us to abstain from all sinful desires which he says: "War against our Soul".

Let us think about that phrase for a moment. "Abstain from sinful desires which war against our Soul". Unfortunately, in today's world, we have a very clear picture of just what war is all about. We have the war on virus, drugs, on crime, on gangs, on poverty, we have cell phone wars. We also seem to be enjoying gas wars, something we have not experienced for decades. It goes on and on. So just what exactly does St. Peter want us to avoid? I don't believe that anyone here want to put our souls in jeopardy; we don't want to have anything as serious as a war between the world and our soul. But how does that translate into our individual lives? What sort of abstinence is he talking about? At just what level do we draw the line in our lives? There are so many examples that we could consider, but it all comes down to one question which we humans grapple with when we consider abstaining from sinful desires: "Just how bad can I be and still be in God's good graces"? How much of the world, which, after all, He did make for us to enjoy, can I experience without placing my soul in danger" This is a question that I think all of us do battle.

So just what will we allow ourselves to submit to? Is our conscience strong enough to tell us when we are approaching a line which should not be crossed? Or are we to avoid everything could lead to temptation, and experience nothing? And if we do that, aren't we are avoiding a shared experience with a fellow traveler who won't learn by our potentially "good example? St. Peter tells us to submit to every authority instituted by man for the Lord's sake, that when we are disobedient to man's law, we are indirectly disobeying God, who has ordained this whole system of human government. In submitting to authority on earth, we are providing the greater good for humankind, and this is necessary to best fulfill the will of God in this world. But this command is also assuming that we have proper, legitimate authorities leading and guiding us on all levels, as our obedience to a civil authority must never be in violation to the laws of God.

The last sentence of the Epistle says, "Show proper respect to everyone; love the brotherhood of believers; fear God; honor the king". Certainly, a mixed bag of commands. Is it even humanly possible to do all these things at the same time? Today I ask you to consider taking a different point of view on this question. When we are told to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, I think that St. Peter may be suggesting to us that, in the scope of eternity, all things here on earth are just minor annoyances and bumps in the road until we reach the kingdom promised us. Submit; relishing the good things that happen and accepting the bad things which will occur as well. But we should raise our awareness to view these things as almost an "out of body" experience. Cognitively being aware of the things here on earth that are occurring, but not letting it over-influence our lives, which should be centered on Jesus. Yes, we are "in this world", our physical bodies interact with everything around us, but there must be something more, we must not be "of this world". So, when things on earth, good and bad, happen, keep the face of Jesus before you. Think more "annoying mosquito" and less "devastating tornado" to the earthly things. We must not allow anything, good -or- bad, to so cloud our reality that we no longer see the one truly important thing which is Christ Jesus.

Let me end this message with the words stated by Pope Saint John Paul II, which I believe accurately sums up St. Peter's epistle on submission: "Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the freedom to do what we ought to do."

Robert F. Ponec+, 2020 [In Memoriam]

Anglican Church Women Report

The 30th synod of the Diocese of Western States has come and gone, and what a synod it was! After being locked down and isolated for over a year, it was a time to renew friendships and make new ones. The atmosphere was upbeat and positive, and with the consecration of a new bishop from the priesthood, the acceptance of two deacons to take the next step to the priesthood, and three postulants for the diaconate, our church is strong and viable. There is such a feeling of love and unity that we can face whatever is ahead and come out victorious.

Our annual ACW meeting was lively, with discussions on where we are going from here, and what was on our minds. We decided that we needed to be in closer contact with one another, and we hope to set up either Zoom meetings or some form of internet contact, as well as *The Shepherd's Staff*. We welcomed our new Treasurer, Patsy Ronat from St. Peter's, Oakland and Mindy Isaacs from our newest church, St David's in San Rafael, CA. Mindy suggested setting up a prayer group for ACW members as an adjunct to the St. Jude Intercessory Prayer Group, where members could request prayer and give updates on those seeking prayer. She will be sending out an introductory email soon to ACW members. The meeting ended with drawings for gifts generously donated by Carol Karcher and Jen Longworth, which raised \$159 for ACW funds! The Bishop Morse Camp fund will benefit from the \$1,396 raised from tickets sold for the ACW Drawings at the annual banquet. This is amazing in a year in which churches have been closed, and ACW chapters have not been able to meet. A heartfelt thanks to all who contributed the 20 items we offered, and to those who bought tickets. Special thanks also to Ellen Ashman for her generous donation of a dinner service, which added almost \$300 to ACW funds.

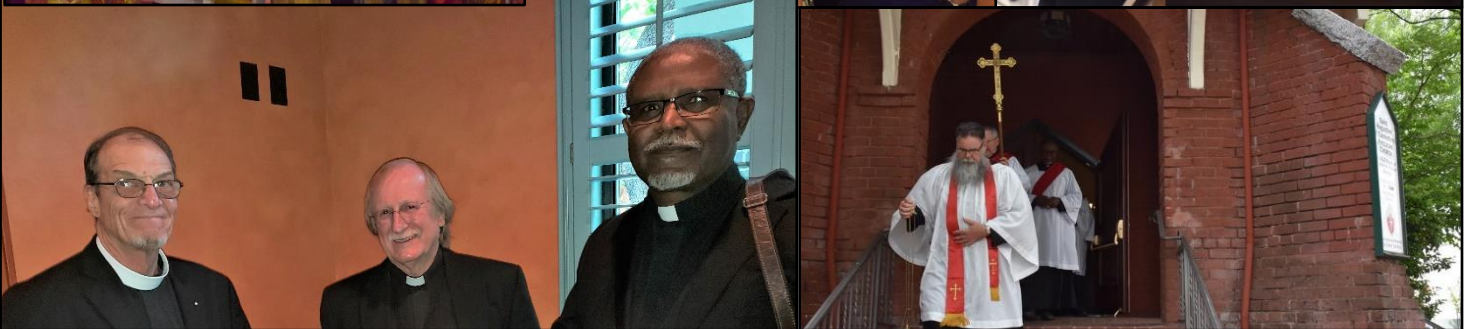
St. Augustine's did an awesome job of hosting the synod, and I would particularly like to thank Mark Tally, who managed to be everywhere he was needed, helped in so many capacities and was unfailingly calm and cheerful. His wife, Clariace was also amazing, particularly in helping with the Drawing items, and overseeing the preparations for the ACW reception before the Bishop's Auction. I am particularly grateful to Debbie Stanford and Patsy Ronat, who organized the transfer of the Drawing items from the church to the banquet and set them out beautifully while I, selfishly, attended the Consecration Service. Carol Karcher is to be especially commended for her highly successful 'Preserve'ing the Priesthood table, which had dozens of jams, jellies, pickles etc. for sale to raise money for Seminary Scholarships. We hope to make this an annual event. And I came away from this synod with a profound faith in the future, whatever it may hold, and with the knowledge of the deep love we have for our God, our church and each other. Together we will prevail.
Gillian Golden, DWS ACW President



The Last Word

This Sermon by Archbishop Morse given in 1995 at our Synod at St. Martin's Concord is so apt for our conditions today. I am concerned about the financial and spiritual health of the average communicant. A financial problem for a church or a diocese is a spiritual problem. If we are to be Eucharistic Christians we can only do so if we completely offer ourselves in every Mass. Money is one's life minted. In the Offertory of the Liturgy, we return to God a portion of the abundance of life He has given us. Love is an exchange. If you do not give, you are emptied by only receiving, and become spiritually dry, so that the Mass is an empty ritual. You, the priests and lay delegates are the committed, so you must alert your fellow Christians to the spiritual responsibility expressed in financial sacrifice. For we offer ourselves in the sacrifice of Christ. Our Lord said that where your heart is, there is your treasure.

Some More Pictures



And Even More Pictures

Photo Credits go to Steve Clark

