



## Vicar's Newsletter

### St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church, Alto, Georgia

#### “Faith, Seeking Understanding”

April 9, 2020 (Maundy Thursday)

It was truly a blessing...being at the altar again!

Palm Sunday was the first time I had celebrated a mass since I visited here on Lent I.

A priest's place is at the altar.

Surely a priest's ministry extends beyond the altar. St. Paul's epistles to St. Timothy and St. Titus make this clear. My mentor, The Venerable Fr. Joseph DeHart (of blessed memory), told me the priest does his most important work Monday through Saturday. He did not mean to lessen the importance of the sacerdotal ministry; he was exhorting me to not overlook the importance of a priest's daily ministry.

But the priest's place is at the altar. Hebrews 5:1 states “*For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*” Here the writer speaks of the honor given to the old covenant, Aaronic priesthood, a ministry that offered sacrifices that could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11).

The sacrifice offered by the new covenant priesthood of Jesus Christ is more honorable in that what (the One who) is offered is Christ's one, perfect sacrifice on Calvary, re-presented to the Father for the remission of our sins! The sacrifice which *does* take away sins! In the mass, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world becomes Really Present for us to partake of (St. John 6:51-58).

In the Prayer of Humble Access we pray “Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood...” The priest at the altar is Jesus' appointed minister who, standing in His person, makes this a reality.

During this pandemic, parishes are being told to not gather as a congregation for the celebration of the mass and partake of the Eucharist together. This is difficult for those who hunger and thirst in their spirit to receive Christ's Body and Blood. It is truly a sacrifice on the part of many.

But thankfully, our Bishops are allowing the priests of our church to celebrate “private masses,” so prayers for the parishes can be brought before the Father by the Holy Ghost through the Sacrifice of Jesus made Present in the Holy Mysteries.

I am grateful that I was able to do this on Palm Sunday. I am grateful I will be able to again today and then again on Easter. I continue to pray I will be able to do so each Sunday until it is deemed safe by our bishops for these restrictions to be lifted.

Friends, the mass needs to be offered! Not just for the sake of priests, but for us all! At this time we need to be pleading the sacrifice of Christ more than ever. Though most will not be able to commune physically, I hope each of you is making some form of spiritual communion on Sunday.

The power to overcome this pandemic and more importantly the power to overcome our sinfulness flows out from Jesus' one, perfect sacrifice offered up and then given to us in the mass! We need to commune with Him as the circumstances allow.

Jesus said “...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” He overcame the world at Calvary. And that is where we are brought back to each time the Holy Mysteries are offered. To procure this benefit, priest's need to be celebrating mass if at all possible. A priest's place is at the altar.

Paschal Triduum Peace & Blessings,

*Fr. Paul*

I was able to speak with some of you during the week. If I was not able to connect with you (or did not call you) this past week, I will be calling next week. You can call me at any time: **540-588-2766**.

*Triduum* is a Latin word that refers to the final three days before Easter: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday with the Easter Vigil. These three days commemorate the pinnacle acts of Christ for our redemption. On Maundy Thursday (another Latin word that means “mandate” or “commandment”), Jesus gave the Church the New Commandment to love one another as He loves us (see St. John 13:34, 35). On that night, Jesus also instituted the Holy Eucharist (St. Luke 22:14-20). On Good Friday, Jesus suffered and died for the sins of the world, ours included (St. Matthew 27:34-54). On Holy Saturday, Jesus lay in the tomb. His was a *bodily* death as in the manner of all men (St. Luke 23:50-56). With the Vigil, we anticipate Jesus’ *bodily* resurrection on Easter. It is the Vigil of vigils as the Church breaks her Lenten fast (after 6:00 p.m.) and begins her Easter celebration!

I’ve sent this bulletin a day early this week so we can focus on prayer during the solemnity of these three days. May we use them to enter more deeply into what Jesus did for us in the Paschal Triduum.

The COVID-19 pandemic will surely subdue the celebration of Easter this year. Typically on Easter the churches are packed. This year, most will not be at mass or the church service they typically attend. Most also have a meal rivaled only by Christmas. This year with the request to shelter in place and avoid unnecessary travel, most will have a quiet meal. Some may have to keep it simple because certain foods are in short supply or they do not want to venture to a grocery store.

These circumstances are unfortunate, and yet they need not dampen the true meaning and spirit of the Easter celebration. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The seat of celebration is in the heart, the spirit, of all who believe upon Christ by faith and hope for the resurrection of the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 is St. Paul’s *magnum opus* teaching on the hope we as Christians gain from Jesus’ resurrection. This is a cause for celebration on any day and in the midst of any circumstances, even coronavirus.

Please call, text or e-mail me if you want to attend the masses on Easter 1 (04-19) or Easter 2 (04-26). Only one person or those from the same family are permitted to attend.

If you are looking for a good read, I recommend the book [You Are What You Love](#) by James K.A. Smith. In it Smith asks the question “What do you love?” His premise being, who and what we worship fundamentally shapes who we are as people. Growth in discipleship is not a matter of the mind, but of the heart. Disciples of Jesus love Jesus and therefore are driven by that love to draw closer to Him (see St. John 21:15-19 and 1 John 4:15-17). We grow in Christ by looking at and changing our life-habits, which Smith identifies as “liturgies.”

The book can be purchased from Amazon in Kindle form for \$9.99 and in hard copy for \$14.99.

Wisdom from the Church Fathers:

“The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, is beginning to be at hand; the reward of life, and the rejoicing of eternal salvation, and the perpetual gladness and possession lately lost of paradise, are now coming, with the passing away of the world; already heavenly things are taking the place of earthly, and great things of small, and eternal things of things that fade away. What room is there here for anxiety and solicitude? Who, in the midst of these things, is trembling and sad, except he who is without hope and faith? For it is for him to fear death who is not willing to go to Christ. It is for him to be unwilling to go to Christ who does not believe that he is about to reign with Christ.”

(Treatise 7, St. Cyprian of Carthage, 3<sup>rd</sup> century bishop and martyr)

Please e-mail (frbeutell@gmail.com) or text or call me (540-588-2766) with your prayer requests.