



St. Thomas the Apostle Newsletter **“Faith, Seeking Understanding”**

May 8, 2020 (Easter Feria)

A foundational part of true Anglo-Catholicism is its Commissioned (i.e. evangelical) focus.

Anglo-Catholics take the Great Commission to ‘go and make disciples’ seriously (St. Matthew 28:19, 20).

In St. Matthew 9:37, 38 Jesus says “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

In every generation of the Church there is a plentiful harvest to reap. We need to be praying to the Lord of the harvest to send us forth as laborers to help reap it.

The entrance way into the Lord’s harvest is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and in particular the Sunday mass. I say Sunday in particular, because that is the day when the whole of the Lord’s chosen harvesters are to gather together (Acts 20:7).

I’ve only watched documentaries about harvesting crops, but in each, the laborers gathered in one place at the beginning of the work day and the foreman gave them instructions and handed out the tools they needed. They were then dismissed to go and reap the...fruit.

Sunday mass is analogous. When we gather for mass, we are given instructions and the tools we need to go and reap...souls. The instructions come from Scripture read and preached. The main reaping tool is grace; the grace of the Body and Blood of Jesus given to us in the Eucharist.

Our duty is to receive the Word and the grace, and then get busy reaping in whichever portion of the field and in whichever way the gifts of God in our life, enable us to. But we must use them! We cannot keep them for our own use only, or worse, bury them (St. Matthew 25:14-30).

The harvest field we find ourselves in today has tricky terrain. We also encounter fruit not ready for harvest and some that is hostile to the Gospel. One thing we can do to help us navigate the field is pray the prayer *For Guidance* (BCP pg. 595) each day, and then add “Lord, how do you want me to serve thee today? Lord, where do you want me to serve thee today? Lord, may I not pass by any opportunity to serve thee today!”

Reaping is a pro-active activity. We have to walk the fields and look for the ready fruit.

1 Peter 3:15 gives us the most basic of harvesting instructions: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” We must let God set us apart for Christ and then remain prepared to answer the questions people will have about our faith and its practice with humility and reverence. If we are set apart and willing to be used, people will ask us, they will (see 1 Peter 2:12)! This is very basic, but it’s effective and something we all can do.

But we must remember, harvesting starts at Sunday mass. We can’t think we can skip Sunday mass attendance and be effective reapers! If I go to a nearby field and jump the fence and start picking its fruit, I’m a trespasser not a laborer. The Lord of the harvest doesn’t want trespassers! He wants laborers willing to work when and where He wants them (St. Matthew 20:1-16).

God has blessed His Church in a number of places to be able to gather again on Sundays for harvesting. Our parish here in NE Georgia is one of them. While for some this is not yet safe due to health concerns, for the rest it is. So let us gather (wisely) for instruction and grace. And then let us go into the fields and reap (see 1 Corinthians 3:7-9).

Fr. Paul

Katee and I have had a nice visit with our family this week, and I was able to see a few friends too. We'll be leaving very early tomorrow morning to drive back to Georgia and I'll be trailering my motorcycle and few more personal items back. Please pray for traveling mercies.

While we cannot return to all parish activities at this time, we will be slowly adding them in. Beginning next week, there will be a weekly, Wednesday mass at noon. Weekday mass provides two things: First, an opportunity for those who desire to receive the Eucharist more than once per week to receive a second time. Second, it is an opportunity to receive the Eucharist for those who were not able to attend on Sunday. We will follow the same guidelines we are using for Sunday mass for the Wednesday mass.

Thursday, May 21 is the Feast of the Ascension. We will celebrate the feast that day with mass at 6:30 p.m. The Book of Common Prayer does not list "Holy days of obligation," but on page I. a "Table of Feasts to be observed in this church throughout the year" is given. The Ascension is one of the feasts listed. The Ascension is the final event of Eastertide. We were not able to gather together for mass to begin the season, so let us do so for its conclusion!

Have you read the book Anglican Catholic Faith and Practice by Archbishop Mark Haverland? If not, I recommend it to you. It lays out the historical, doctrinal, sacramental, moral and liturgical foundations of Anglo-Catholicism in a clear and concise manner, and is used by many in the Continuum for adult catechetical instruction. I have purchased several copies of the book. If you would like to read it, you can purchase it from me for \$14.00, or from the Anglican Parishes Association (a link can be found off the ACC website). I hope to have a group study of this book when we are able to.

Wisdom from the Church Fathers: "Let them know that we are proved by our Lord, and let them never fail of that faith whereby we have once believed in Him, under the conflict of this present affliction. Let each one, acknowledging his own sins, even now put off the conversation of the old man. *For no man who looks back as he puts his hand to the plough is fit for the kingdom of God.* (Luke 9:62) And, finally, Lot's wife, who, when she was delivered, looked back in defiance of the commandment, lost the benefit of her escape. (Genesis 19:26) Let us look not to things which are behind, whither the devil calls us back, but to things which are before, whither Christ calls us. Let us lift up our eyes to heaven, lest the earth with its delights and enticements deceive us. Let each one of us pray God not for himself only, but for all the brethren, even as the Lord has taught us to pray, when He bids to each one, not private prayer, but enjoined them, when they prayed, to pray for all in common prayer and concordant supplication. If the Lord shall behold us humble and peaceable; if He shall see us joined one with another; if He shall see us fearful concerning His anger; if corrected and amended by the present tribulation, He will maintain us safe from the disturbances of the enemy. Discipline has preceded; pardon also shall follow." St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (3rd century) Epistle 7, section 7.

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Please send me your prayer requests! Email frbeutell@gmail.com or text / phone 540-588-2766