



All Saints' News

September, 2004

What You're doing on Saturday, September 25

If you are considering becoming a Lay Eucharistic Minister, Lector, Usher, or Sacristan, or if you have been serving in one or some of these capacities, you're invited to breakfast at 9:00 on Saturday, September 25. Our Deacon has a strong desire to have all our ministers "reading from the same page," so you are strongly encouraged to come. Remember, this is for those presently serving as well as those who are interested.

Top 10 Reasons to Be an Episcopalian

From the comedian Robin Williams, who is an Episcopalian, on an HBO special:

10. No snake handling.
9. You can believe in dinosaurs.
8. Male and female God created them; male and female we ordain them.
7. You don't have to check your brains at the door.
6. Pew aerobics.
5. Church year is color-coded.
4. Free wine on Sunday.
3. All of the pageantry -- none of the guilt.
2. You don't have to know how to swim to get baptized.

The Number One reason to be an Episcopalian:

1. No matter what you believe, there's bound to be at least one other Episcopalian who agrees with you.

Don't stop now... there is more... Episcopalians occasionally believe in miracles and sometimes even expect them, particularly during stewardship canvasses or when electing bishops or recruiting church school teachers. Episcopalians believe in ecumenical dialogue because they are certain that after all is said and done, everyone else is bound to become Episcopalian. Episcopalians strongly believe in Scripture, tradition and reason. While they aren't sure what they believe about these three things, there is almost universal agreement that that is hardly the point. Episcopalians believe that everything in their life and faith is improved by the presence of good food and drink, as long as it isn't lime-carrot jello, tropical punch Kool-Aid, or canned tuna fish in any form.

Episcopalians believe that anything worth doing is especially worth doing if it has an obscure title attached to it (e.g., sexton, thurifer, acolyte, verger, suffragan, canon, dean). Likewise, Episcopalians believe that any place worth visiting is greatly enhanced by a name that only obliquely describes it (e.g., nave, narthex, sacristy, undercroft, church school supply room). Episcopalians firmly believe that coffee hour is the eighth sacrament, but only if the coffee is caffeinated. *[editor's note: not at All Saints!]*

Episcopalians believe that anthems are most efficacious if sung in Latin or German, especially during Lent. Episcopalians generally believe that they are the only people God trusts enough to take the summers off from Church. Some Episcopalians believe Rite I is the best expression of the liturgy. Some believe Rite II is better. Most Episcopalians haven't noticed the difference; they just hope the whole thing gets over before noon.

Encountering Christ

Reflection by the Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold

The somewhat slower pace that characterizes summer is speeding up as autumn descends upon us and we begin again the round of activities that constitute our congregational life. This is an opportune moment to reflect upon what most deeply shapes and forms us as authentic communities of faith.

My own sense is that it is our worship, which is an encounter with the risen and living Christ, an event much larger than anything we can easily comprehend or define. A recent survey has indicated that what most has drawn new members to the Episcopal Church is our worship.

My understanding of what it means to be the church is derived largely from the sacraments. All sorts and conditions, all languages and cultures, are gathered into Christ's risen body through baptism. That body matures and is built up through the Eucharist.

At an intuitive level I think we are aware that liturgy opens the door to another dimension of reality, a dimension we hunger for.

Explanations and rationalizations cannot convey the full force of the encounter with its life giving power. I think here of my own first experience of the Eucharist, which was at a weekday liturgy in the chapel of the school where I was a student. Though I had only the dimmest notion of what was going on, I was overwhelmed by the experience of a transcendent reality for which I had no explanation.

I am reminded of a late evening service I once attended in an urban cathedral. The nave was packed with young people sitting in the pews or lying on the floor resting their heads on back packs. They had given themselves over to the experience of the moment and were reverently absorbed in an ancient form of liturgical prayer.

While the plain chant soared into the vaulting, I found myself asking what deep mystery had laid hold upon these young people in such a way that they return to that sacred space week after week. Could it be that the risen Christ, speaking a language beyond words that only can be understood by the soul, had addressed these young people and drawn them there?

When we worship, we are doing much more than entering into a ritual pattern. We are participating in the very life of Christ. And at the heart of Christ's life lies the paschal pattern of death and resurrection: multiple dyings and risings, losings and findings, whereby we are shaped and formed and conformed to the image of the One whose name we bear. Liturgy, therefore, is dangerous stuff, not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly. Perhaps this is why we sometimes protect ourselves from its force by limiting the level of our participation. We might observe it at a safe emotional distance or perhaps, particularly in the case of the priest, take on the role of "technician of the sacred," which allows us to control the liturgy and to keep "the lion of the tribe of Judah" – one of the scriptural titles for the risen Christ – safely at bay.

The contemporary writer Annie Dillard says that if we had any idea what worship was truly about, we would wear crash helmets to church. The words of our common prayer, she observes, are ones we have found we can successfully get through without getting killed! It is a strong image but indeed an appropriate reminder of the power of liturgy. In a world where so many things seem unstable and unsure, the continuing presence of the risen Christ in word and sacrament affords us a place to which we can return, and from which we can go forth. And, through the various strains within the church itself, the liturgy can be a place where we meet, not because we have reconciled all our opinions, but because we have been reconciled beyond our wildest imaginings by the risen Lord. Because liturgy communicates to us the life of Christ, it is always positive and filled with hope, and gives us the courage to live into an unknown future.

Let us therefore approach our liturgical celebrations in fear and trembling and with open and expectant hearts, ready to encounter the One who desires so deeply to share the full mystery of His death and resurrection with us.

Passed along by Kitty Wysong from the September, 2004 issue of Episcopal Life.

The Music of the Spheres

Welcome back to Irina Gorb, who has returned from her annual pilgrimage home to Latvia! And thanks again to our willing “subs” in Irina’s absence, Carole Immel and Jamie Maury.

Religion and Politics

A reflection by our retired Bishop, copied with his permission from the newsletter of St. Paul’s, Savannah.

Religion and politics have become quite intertwined of late, and election year only intensifies the discussions. Varying Christian moral values seem to clash, including those of the two men who will be seeking the Presidency in November. Persons characterized as evangelical Christian “right” seem to have quite different positions on public issues than those of so-called “main line” liberal churches, especially concerning the proposed Constitutional amendment defining marriage, the stem cell research issue, and abortion rights. While the liberal media fails to make much note of it, the Roman Catholic Church is committed to positions nearly identical to those of the evangelical Protestant “right”. However, evangelicals seem easier for the media to assail. Now some Roman Catholic (RC) bishops are threatening to deny Holy Communion to RC politicians who do not

conform to RC teachings in their public stances.

The Evangelicals have their literal approach to the Bible and the Roman Catholics have the teaching magisterium of the Vatican. Episcopalians can be counted in both the evangelical camp and the liberal camp, straining our domestic life to the point of impaired communion and possibly even schism. But while our position may be rather tenuous, the undersigned would rather be part of a less dogmatic and less self-assured ecclesial structure, unwieldy as it sometimes may be. Certainly we would not tolerate our bishops refusing us the Sacrament if we did not conform to a particular moral equation.

Difficult and awkward, yes. But let us hang in there together with prayer and study. The Holy Spirit will sort it out. He (She) always has.

Bishop H. W. Shipps

Skill and Craft Auction Right Around the Corner!

The ECW church wide skill and craft auction is right around the corner! It’ll be held on Saturday, September 11, beginning at 5:30 for beverages, hors d’oeuvres, fellowship and viewing the items that will be auctioned. The auction will begin at 6:30.

There’s still time to donate a skill or craft! Some ideas of things to donate are: prints and art work, dinner for two or more, hair cut and styling, boat rides, yoga classes, specialty baked items, massage, use of your beach home for a week or weekend, a bed and breakfast weekend, computer class, nature walk, calligraphy, painting, baby sitting, yard work, use of your time share, concert, high tea... let your imagination soar and donate something you like and that someone else might like to share.

Signup sheets are still available at the church mission hall. Contact Marcie Chéreau or Lee McHenry with questions.

Mark your calendar:

After Labor Day, we return to one service only, 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, September 11, 2004: Skill and Craft auction
Saturday, September 25: Lay Ministries Breakfast
Saturday, October 23, 2004: Yard sale

Cursillo #104: A Weekend to Renew

October 14-17, 2004, is the next Cursillo weekend in the Diocese of Georgia. Cursillo is a three-day weekend of getting to know more about yourself and more about how God is present in your life. The retreat will be held at Honey Creek. The time is filled with talks and discussions, often about those very things you've been wondering about. There is music and fun, lots of humor, some seriousness, a lot of getting to know one another and making friends in Christ. For more details, contact pgohman@surfsouth.com

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