

November 8th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of our beliefs as Anglican Christians with our study of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we looked at Article 24 and discussed the importance of using a language that the people of the church understand and can engage in. Today, that language is God's Grace given through the Church.

*Article 25 - The Sacraments - Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by which He works invisibly in us, and not only quickens, but also strengthens and confirms, our faith in Him. There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five, commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not the like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, have they a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation, as S. Paul said."*

The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. which is the definition from the 1979 BCP for the Sacraments. Anyone who has faithfully approached the altar and received the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ has received the wonderful, life giving and forgiving Grace of our Lord Jesus. That's what Richard Hooker meant when he said that we receive an invisible Grace through an outward and visible sign.

The article is clear to state that the two primary sacraments were instituted by Jesus and are demonstrated in the scriptures - **Eucharist/the Lord's Supper** - and **Baptism**. However, the early church also noted those passages in life that were and are moments of



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transition - spiritual, physical and ministerial. **Holy Matrimony** - the coming together of one man and one woman in a life long union. **Confession & Absolution** make for a spiritual reconciliation between God and Man in a powerful and holy manner. **Unction** - the anointing with oil for healing marks the ministry of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit. **Ordination** is the setting aside of individuals for the special ministry of the Episcopate, the Priesthood and the Deaconate. **Confirmation** is that sacrament that marks the transition to a mature faith along with a formal confession of faith and public acceptance of ministry.

The Anglican Church affirmed the sacraments of the universal church but also noted potential abuses. There was an emphasis in some parts of the church of what is known as ocular communion - meaning by gazing upon the sacrament one received the Grace of God. The abuse came with the conception that only the clergy were worthy to receive Holy Communion - that "common laity" were not in a sufficient state of Grace to receive the body and blood of Christ. Thus they could look upon the consecrated elements and receive God's grace. This error failed to understand that God's Grace is not earned nor merited but given to those who come in faith with a contrite heart.

Some have argued that this article, taken in a literal fashion, would mean that communion could not be taken to the sick or venerated in the Mass. I would disagree with this interpretation and argue that the last paragraph of the article was meant to address abuses that had occurred in the Roman Church with Ocular Communion and the Purchase of Indulgences.

Ultimately, the sacraments are a mystery - God's Grace poured out through His Church in His Sacraments feed the soul and nourish the body of Christ - which is the Church.

Have a blessed week!

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

[November 2012 Edition of The San Joaquin Anglican](#)

Check this edition of the San Joaquin Anglican  
for current news of the Diocese!

[Diocesan Calendar](#)

Check the Diocesan Calendar for information on upcoming events!

**November 9th-11th** - Womens' Retreat @ECCO  
sponsored by St. James' Cathedral

**November 10th** - Eucharist @ Resurrection in Tracy

**November 11th** - Bishop @ St. Matthias in Oakdale

**November 13th** - Rural Deans  
**November 17th** - Diocesan Council @ 10 a.m.  
**November 18th** - Bishop @ St. Mary's in Manteca  
**November 25th** - Bishop @ St. Michael's in Ridgecrest  
**December 1st** - Deacon's Day @ St. James Cathedral  
**December 3-5th** - Clergy Retreat @ECCO  
**December 14th - 15th** - Men's Retreat in Spanish @ ECCO  
**February 1st - 2nd** - Little Brothers & Sisters of Sacrifice Winter  
Retreat & Joint Vestry Retreat with the Bishop (Both @ ECCO)  
**February 8th-9th** - Joint Vestry Retreat with the Bishop @ECCO  
**February 15th-18th** - Anglican 4th Day Retreat @ECCO  
**April 29th - May 1st** - Clergy Conference

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