

January 31st, 2013

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This week we continue our discussion of the 39 Articles of Religion. Two weeks ago we explored the question of marriage being an honorable estate and how the church should not require life vows of chastity. Today the subject changes to order in the church. We cannot exist without structure and order and an important aspect to that is discipline.

Article 33 - Excommunicated Persons, how they are to be avoided That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church and excommunicated, ought to be taken by the whole multitude of the faithful as an heathen and publican, until he is openly reconciled by penance and received into the Church by a judge that has authority to do so.

Specifically this article speaks to the discipline of Excommunication - the barring of people from receiving Holy Communion which places a person outside of the life of the church and her fellowship. This discipline is taken when people make an open denunciation of the church and her faith both in words and in practice by living in open sin and rebellion without remorse or repentance.

Over the years the church practiced discipline but something seemed to change in the 1960s when Bishop James Pike of the Episcopal Diocese of California (San Francisco) openly denied the central tenants of the faith including the very existence of God. Upon his denunciation of the faith the church failed to act to discipline him and that failure to act has had consequences that have led to the very sad state of affairs that the Church finds herself in at the moment. The list of failures to discipline in the Episcopal Church grew through the years since James Pike and include Bishop Spong of New Jersey who denies the resurrection and the current Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church who argues that "all paths lead to god." Thus proclaiming that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was pointless and without redemption. When the church fails to exorcise discipline among its leaders she invites the wolves into the sheep pin. When the church fails to exorcise discipline among the sheep she invites a virus into the church...a virus that erodes the vitality of the congregation.

Church discipline needs to follow the biblical principle laid out in Matthew 18: 15-17 ***"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. If he does not listen, go with one or two others. If he listens to them, you have won your brother. If he does not listen to them, tell the church. If he does not listen to the church, treat him as a heathen and a publican."***



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him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

In essence - go in private - if that doesn't work go with a brother - if that doesn't work involve the church, (the clergy) and if he fails to repent then he is to be set aside and refused the sacrament. An all too common example of this, and one I have had to confront, comes when a parishioner is accused of adultery. When confronted, the person justified and rationalized. After bringing proof and their refusal to repent, they were denied communion. This happens only with serious prayer, discernment and, if excommunication is required, with the permission of the bishop. Not to address an issue like this in the congregation ends up by splitting the congregation and diminishing the teaching of the clergy and thus damaging the ministry of the church. I am pleased to say that in more cases than not the person recognized their error, repented and the church community was strengthened, the persons own relationship with Christ was restored and the ministry of the church spread.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

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[January 2013 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!

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

February 16th - Diocesan Council @9 a.m.

February 17th - Bishop @ St. Michael & All Angels in Sonora

February 23th - Deacon's Day @ 9 a.m. at St. James Cathedral

February 24th - Bishop @Jesus the Good Shepherd in Henderson,
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April 29th - May 1st - Clergy Conference

August 2-4th - Anglican Church Women's Annual Retreat
at Camp San Joaquin

Diocese of San Joaquin www.dioceofsanjoaquin.net 559-244-4828