

## Bishop's Note

### Why I'm an Anglican #4: Because It's Sacramental!

You will remember from your catechism class, that the traditional definition of a sacrament is: “**an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.**” I pray that, more than just remembering from catechism class, you are receiving God's Grace regularly in and through the sacraments. God's Grace is what sustains us, fills us, comforts us, equips us, and impels us forward.

Essentially, the sacraments of the Church are one of God's ways of speaking into our lives pastorally. The two primary sacraments commanded by Jesus - Baptism & Holy Eucharist - speak powerfully to Christ's sacrificial death upon the cross in the ultimate act of redemption. In the sacrament of **Baptism**, we have that outward and visible sign of water and oil in receiving God's Grace and redemption. I came to Christ as a young man, and was baptized at age 14 (though two years later I learned that the nun at St. Francis hospital in Lynnwood, CA baptized me and every child born there from 1950 - 1970... but that's another story). I was able, then, to make a public renunciation of Satan, and a public acceptance of Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. That grace was signified with the symbolic washing away of my sins and anointing with oil, sealing me “**as Christ's own forever.**” My baptism was a turning point in both my life, and in the life of my family. Soon after that service, on January 2nd 1976, my parents began attending church with me, and my brother began attending church with his girl friend and soon-to-be wife. God's Grace spoke powerfully into our lives.

**Holy Eucharist**, or the Lord's Supper, is a sacrament that speaks pastorally into our lives on a weekly or even daily basis, and, frankly, I can't imagine life without the great joy of receiving the sacrament or the privilege of celebrating Holy Eucharist. What a tremendous honor it is, for any priest, to look into the eyes of a forgiven sinner and say, “**The body of Christ. The Bread of heaven.**” At that moment, we have a foretaste of the heavenly banquet and the assurance of Christ's amazing love for us who do not deserve it, but can only receive it!

Of course, in addition to the two primary sacraments, we have Christ speaking into our lives in the other five sacraments of the Church.

**Confirmation** - is that moment where men and women, at an age of understanding, both renounce Satan, and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior (or confirm that acceptance). This is especially powerful for those baptized as children, who had no say in the matter. At Confirmation, men and women are set aside and empowered for ministry and leadership in the church. I have always said, and firmly believe, that the Lay Order is the most important of the church.

**Marriage** - is that sacrament which affirms the biblical plan of setting aside one man and one woman in the life-long partnership of husband and wife. The comfort and

care given to the couple is not meant only for them, but for their families, if God grants them the blessing of children. Marriage also gives us an expression of Jesus' relationship with us, His Church. In the marriage service, as the rings are exchanged, the couple say to one another, **"I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am and all that I have I honor you."** This is the ideal that the sacrament of marriage sets for the couple and with Christ Jesus.

**Confession/Reconciliation** - is that sacrament where Jesus speaks to us audibly through the priest as he pronounces absolution. Knowing that, when we come to the Lord with an humble and contrite heart, we are, indeed, forgiven of our sins. I make my confession regularly, and I am, as a forgiven sinner, always moved to hear those words, **"I absolve you of your sins: In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord has put away all of your sins. Go in peace and pray for me a sinner"**

**Ordination** - This is a sacrament reserved for those who are set aside for the ministries of Deacon, Priest, or Bishop. God speaks so powerfully and pastorally into the lives of individuals and the church, through the sacrament of ordination, by providing structure for the church and her ministry, and by setting aside individuals to be used for the Glory of God and the benefit of man.

**Holy Unction** - This sacrament of prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with Holy Oil, is the epitome of Jesus speaking pastorally into our lives. When we are ill and sometimes at the point of death, to receive the loving prayers, the words of scripture, and the laying on of hands by a priest or bishop, speaks so powerfully of Christ love for the sick and dying - a condition, because of the Fall, that all of us have and will find ourselves in.

One of reasons that I am an Anglican is because of our emphasis on God's Word and God's sacraments, which speak so powerfully and pastorally into all aspects and times of our lives!

I pray you every blessing this week!

Bishop Menees