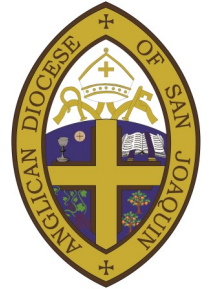


THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

The Reverend Phil Berghuis, Diocesan Administrator

Many people who have come to Anglicanism over the last few years come on what's often referred to as the Canterbury Trail. They're people who have grown up as evangelicals and they're just now coming to embrace Anglicanism. When they're asked what it was in Anglicanism that interested them, it's rarely a fancy program or church growth strategy, rather it's often established parts of the tradition many Anglicans take for granted, such as the lectionary, the rhythm of the Daily Office, and the Eucharist. As people often say, in Anglicanism "everything old is new again!"

It's partly because some of these old practices have been forgotten by many in the world, and partly because some established traditions deal with more novel ideas. One area we can see why these forgotten practices are enduring and beneficial in the lives of Christians is during the season of Lent. There are many groups that offer various activities and teachings during this season; however, we should ground our Lent on the three traditional pillars of **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**. For some these three pillars may be seen as quite disparate. Non-Christians may even look at these as prayer, dieting, and charitable giving, and in that way they are disparate. But what joins these three pillars together for us as Christians is justice.

BISHOP'S SCHEDULE AND DIOCESAN CALENDAR

March 9 - 10:00 am - Rural Deans Meeting

March 13 - 10:00 am—Commission on Ministry Meeting

March 16 - 12:00 pm - Northern Deanery and Central Deanery Clericuses

March 17 - Regional Chrism Mass at Trinity in Bakersfield

March 17 - 1:30 pm - Southern Deanery Clericus

March 20 - 10:00 am - Standing Committee Meeting

March 24 - Northern Regional Chrism Mass

March 24 - 5:00 pm - East-West Deanery Clericus on Zoom

March 25 - The Annunciation

March 28 - Palm Sunday

March 30 - Regional Chrism Mass in Fresno

April 1 - Maundy Thursday

April 2 - Good Friday, Diocesan Office Closed

April 4 - Easter Sunday

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Despite all the ways justice is spoken of today, as Christians it has a simple definition: justice is giving each person their due. In criminal justice you have people who have transgressed society's laws and as a result they're due a punishment of some kind. Many people in our country have been clamoring for justice this past year, and what they really want is for people to be treated fairly, for them to be given the respect they're due as creatures made in the image of God. It may not seem like it, but each of these three Lenten pillars is rooted in justice; they just express that justice in different ways.

Prayer is rooted in many factors such as faith, hope and love, but prayer is also rooted in justice. All people, not just Christians, should be able to look at the world around them and see that nothing comes about spontaneously. This creation has to have some sort of creator existing outside of it who set it in motion. That creator is of course God. From that perspective as creations who have benefited from God's actions and who can't do anything of our own, justice demands that we worship and give thanks to God. The impulse to worship and prayer we see from justice is why it is often referred to as the virtue of religion. Now that is what should be clear to all, but we as Christians know the bigger picture. Not only do we have God to thank for our creation, God sent his only Son to take on our flesh and die for our salvation. We can never hope to pay back God for what he's done for us, but prayer is something God is due and the Lenten season leads us to be more intentional about prayer.

While prayer is rooted in justice towards God, almsgiving is rooted in justice towards our neighbors. Too often people are quick to look on the poor and needy and falsely interpret justice. Someone may see a homeless person on the street and respond, "Well, that's what you get when you abuse drugs," or "they're too lazy to work." These statements imply that the person's poverty or need is the just result of their own actions, and often they're said to justify our own inaction. The problem is those statements are completely devoid of Christian love. Even if someone is in that state because of their own actions, Jesus never said, "Blessed are you who are poor through no fault of your own." What these people are due from us as Christians is love and mercy. We should be reaching out to them to share the love of Christ, and almsgiving is one of the many ways that can be done. Almsgiving is giving to charitable organizations over and above the tithe we give to our local congregations. The alms or donations could be to a homeless shelter, a pregnancy care center, or a food bank. There are lots of different groups and ministries we can give to. It is important to remember that almsgiving isn't asking what you want to give to or who you want to give to, rather it's asking God how he wants you to show love to your neighbor.

Whereas prayer and almsgiving are about giving to those other than you, fasting in a sense is about self-justice. Justice in giving each person their due balanced between two extremes, selfishness and selflessness. In our society, we tend more towards selfishness than selflessness. This is readily apparent when it comes to the things we have in our life, like food. For example, the average caloric intake has gone up 24 percent from 1961. It's not just that we're eating more; we are consuming what we don't need in food. A time without food is a reminder of what real hunger is like and helps us to balance our consumption; but even more than that, it's a reminder of what we really need in our lives. The things in our life, even food that is essential to our survival, shouldn't be our main focus. Fasting reminds us that our main focus needs to be on God.

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In a year when so much has changed in the world, Lent is a time when we should go back to the traditional tried-and-true practices of the church: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These aren't just random practices the church has hobbled together for a season; they're changes we can engage in to better understand how to live lives of faith. We can't be righteous of our own apart from Jesus Christ, but through God's working in our lives, we can better conform ourselves to the righteousness of Christ. That's what this season of Lent and our whole lives as Christians is all about.

A.C.T.S. Catechists at Jesus the Good Shepherd Henderson, Nevada

By Fr. Howard Giles

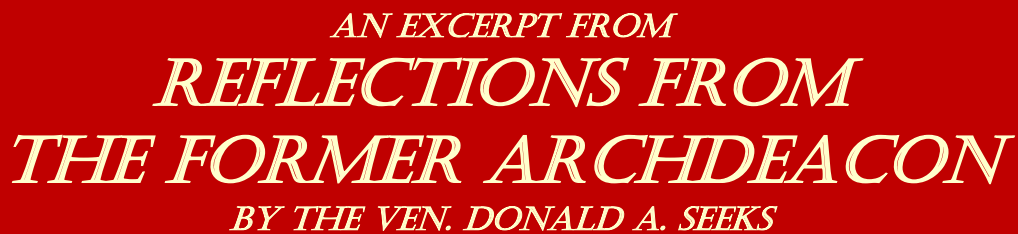

Fr. Howard Giles, rector of Jesus the Good Shepherd in Henderson, Nevada, reflects on how the Anglican Catechist Training School (ACTS) and the ministry of trained lay catechists impacted his congregation.

Two of our parishioners were confirmed by another Bishop in another state, and I couldn't be happier. When the couple came to us over two years ago, they didn't know an Anglican from an anglican and had not been attending church.

This sweet couple immigrated to the U.S. a few years ago having fled communist Cuba and settled in Las Vegas. Their hunger for learning the Sacraments and about the life of the Church led them to pursue the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and to baptize their children. The couple received intense preparation for baptism and marriage instruction from our Licensed Lay Catechists who were graduates of the A.C.T.S. training program.

As a bi-vocational priest, my rarest resource is time. And while I have taught the catechism myself, I haven't figured out how to bi-locate and teach it while celebrating the early Mass! I needed well qualified, dedicated and passionate Lay Catechists, and these catechists were a great answer to this need. They shaped and molded their instructions for non-native individuals who were not proficient in speaking English, including three-year-old twins, laborers, college graduates and adult learners of every age and background. Their instructions were offered online, before church, after church, and during our 9:00 AM Mass.

When the new parishioners and their family moved from Las Vegas to find employment in another state, we grieved as a Church family. In the first few weeks in their new city, they reported having trouble finding an ACNA parish that was open and active. They texted our Lay Catechists who helped them use the ACNA parish finder as well as prayed with them to find a new congregation to attend. When they first told me that they had found a home, I was ready to be disappointed that it wasn't Anglican. To my surprise they had actually become a part of two Anglican Churches in Missouri in order to meet the spiritual needs that were being met by our loving Church family, part-time clergy and trained, competent and confident Lay Catechists!



AN EXCERPT FROM
**REFLECTIONS FROM
THE FORMER ARCHDEACON**
BY THE VEN. DONALD A. SEEKS

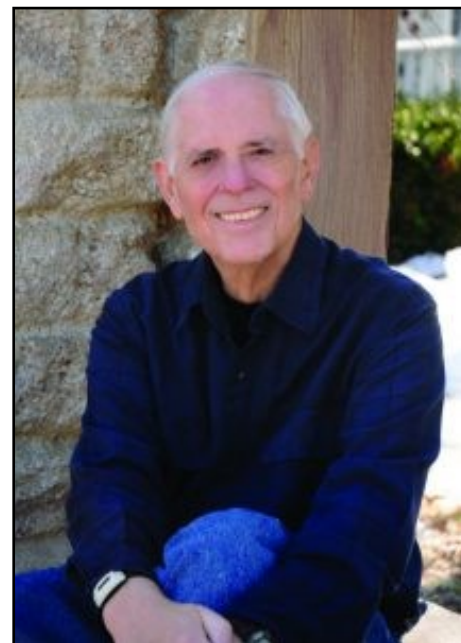
Who was Thomas C. Oden, Junior?

In an article in *Christianity Today*, Thomas C. Oden, Junior, who was once a modernist theologian, embraced what he called “classical Christian orthodoxy” through his studies of early ecumenical councils and the writings of biblical classical authors.

The late theologian Thomas C. Oden, Jr., who died unexpectedly at age 59, was interviewed by author Christopher Hall. Oden told how he began in college and from 1945 to 1965, “every turn was a left turn,” he said. In seminary he became enamored with the works of Albert Outler and Rudolph Bultmann. These two were heavily influenced by *Form Criticism of the Bible*, a method developed which attempts to analyze Scriptural passages by studying their literary forms. Bultmann carried this to the extreme; so much so he became very skeptical of the authenticity of much of the New Testament. Indeed, he held that not only were events like the Virgin Birth and the physical resurrection of Jesus mythical in nature, but that the whole New Testament had a strongly mythical element. By the time Bultmann was finished, almost nothing of the Gospel story could be held as authentic.

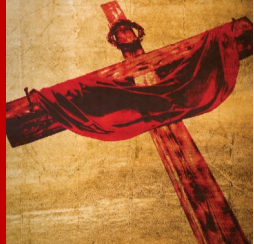


Thomas Oden was “avidly attracted” to this modernist theology. Since Biblical truth was in real question, he surmised, one was free to experiment – with sexual expression, communitarianism, drugs, yoga, trot cards, and many other things that today were being called “The New Age.”

Dr. Oden’s “reversal” as he calls it, began when he did more research and recognized that in his previous readings, he had been studying contemporary theological and psychological works almost exclusively. He turned to the classics: the Anti-Nicene Fathers, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Lancelot Andrewes, Wesley, and others. From the classical authors, Dr. Oden discovered truths which put to great question the four tenets of modernism: (1) moral relativism, which says that what is right is dictated by our society; (2) autonomous individualism, which



Dr. Thomas C. Oden (1931-2016)

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AN EXCERPT FROM
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says that moral authority comes only from within a person: (3) narcissistic hedonism, which focuses on self and upon one's own pleasure; (4) naturalism, which reduces everything to that which can be experienced by the senses.

Dr. Oden began to see his friends' lives being torn up by self-centeredness and inward-looking lifestyles. Abortion became a watershed issue for him when he realized that pre-born children were being destroyed in the interest of an individual's choice which was in turn caused by choosing to live under irresponsible sexual unaccountability and a desire for personal convenience.

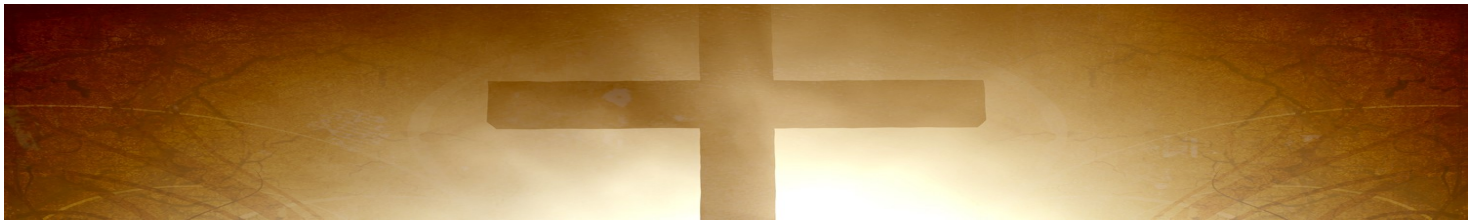
As he studied the early ecumenical councils and read the works of the great Church doctors such as Athanasius, Basil Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, St. John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Gregory the Great, he could see the Holy Spirit at work in the creeds, councils, and teachers, forming a consensus about what is Truth in Christianity and what is not. Further, their pronouncements were backed up by the general consent of the laity, who understood much of apostolic teaching and knew whether what they were hearing was orthodoxy or heresy. It is the Holy Spirit," said Oden, "Who guides us to all truth, a truth which expresses the accumulating historical wisdom of a community called by God's revealed Word that has lived through time and changing cultures." Oden wrote, "The Bible is crucial to the Christian life because these texts alone convey the history of God's saving action."

Another gift from these early writers for Dr. Oden was a new sense of the importance of the Sacraments. He commended several well-known Anglican writers such as Bishop Stephen Neill, Canon Michael Green, Dr. John Stott, and Professors J. I. Packer, and Philip E. Hughes. "The apostolic criterion is not flatly whether something is old or new," said Oden, "but whether or not it is truthful in the sense of being true to the apostolic testimony in God's revelations, the truth personally incarnate in Jesus Christ."

In modernism, novelty becomes the criterion for truth: "... our culture errs in the direction of the idolatry of the new," said Oden. Instead, "the laity perennially need a living tradition of preaching, worship, and discipline which is renewed by being re-appropriated to the present, so that tradition and renewal become mutually corrective."

I was tremendously impressed by the thoughts and testimony of Dr. Thomas C. Oden, and I hope after reading this column you will be as well. I recommend you begin with his first of many books: *A Change of Heart*.

Notable: *Thomas Clark Oden was an American Methodist theologian and religious author. He is often regarded as the father of the paleo-orthodox theological movement and is considered to be one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.*

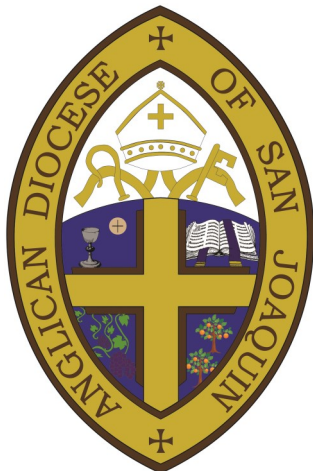


ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Bishop's Note series--

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Thank you!