THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



The Bishop's Corner

The Right Reverend Eric Vawter Menees

e Christians are an odd lot. This month on Tuesday, September 14th, we will celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross. This is a feast dedicated to the veneration of an instrument of death—a very gruesome instrument of death.

Eusebius, the fourth century historian and bishop of Caesarea wrote in his *Life of Constantine*, about how the Emperor Constantine ordered a series of buildings to be constructed upon the site of Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem where the current Church of the Holy Sepulcher now stands. These buildings were to be created specifically for the veneration of the Holy Cross.

How odd that must have been for the people of the fourth century who, I'm sure, would still remember the Via Appia lined with crosses replete with the crucified upon them as a warning to all who would dare challenge Roman rule or Roman law. But Constantine knew that with Jesus, this instrument of death would become an instrument of life and life eternal with Jesus Christ. As I said, we are an interesting lot as Christians. Just as Jesus transformed an instrument of death into an instrument of life so too in Christ, St. Paul tells us

Bishop's Schedule And Diocesan Calendar

September 15 - 10:30 am -Diocesan Clergy Zoom Meeting

September 15 - 1:30 pm - Southern Deanery Clericus

September 16 - 6:30 pm -Preaching Class

September 18 - 10:00 am - Standing Committee

September 19 - Bishop at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fresno

September 19 - Bishop at St. Mary's, Manteca

September 21 - 12:00 pm - Central Deanery Clericus

September 21 - 12:00 pm - Northern Deanery Clericus

September 22 - 5:00 pm - East-West Deanery Clericus on Zoom

September 24 - Anniversary of Bishop Eric's Consecration

September 24-26 - Clergy Wives Retreat, St. Anthony's Retreat

September 26 - Bishop Eric at St. Mark's, Loomis

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that: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come." (2 Cor. 5:17) We remember on this feast day that because Jesus paid the price for us – we are a new creation!

September 14th also holds a special place in my heart because it is the day of my children's baptism. Milagro and Sebastian are nearly seven years apart and were baptized on the Feast of the Holy Cross. We have a tradition that on September 14th we have a special family dinner along with the lighting of their baptismal candles and the renewal of their baptismal vows. Perhaps that is a tradition that might appeal to you and your family?

On another note, we look forward to this year's Clergy Conference, taking place December 6-8 at St. Anthony's Retreat Center in Three Rivers, CA. We are blessed to have Dr. Hans Boersma of Nashotah



House as our guest speaker. Dr. Boersma is a well-known speaker and author who desires to recover the 'sacramental ontology' and sacramental mindset of the pre-modern tradition. He will speak to us on the Incarnation of Christ. Come and be renewed for the season of Advent! Registration with details is forthcoming this fall and will be posted on the diocesan website.



AN EXCERPT FROM REFLECTIONS FROM THE FORMER ARCHDEACON



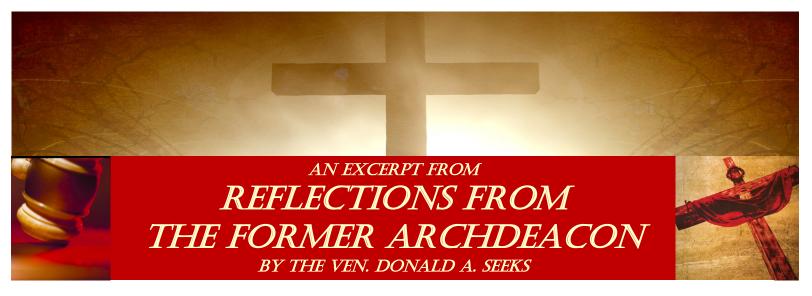
BY THE VEN. DONALD A. SEEKS

Compassion

Last week I had the privilege, on two occasions, morning and evening, to hear the gracious Gospel wisdom of Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, Senior Pastor of the famous Central Baptist Church in Inglewood, CA. Dr. Ulmer's credentials are impressive – a graduate of the University of Illinois with an earned doctorate from Grace School of Theology. He also is a sometime professor at Pepperdine and Biola Universities, as well as Fuller Seminary in Pasadena.

Dr. Ulmer declared he believed that a "fresh wind is blowing in the land, that God is doing something in the Spirit realm that is affecting the world's realm," and so it is high time for Christians to be acting as though faith is much more than a once-a-week function. The declaration God is giving to we Christians is to announce to the world that

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we have a God Who is bigger than anything which might divide us, and we are called to the uncertain world that former divisions which tended to separate Christians are being superseded by a unified desire to bring Christ to those who do not yet know Him.

The two texts used by Dr. Ulmer were portions of St. John 4:3-42, the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, and St. Matthew 9:35-38, the story of Jesus' compassion for the lost, His subsequent charge to the disciples (and to us) to go labor in the readied harvest. In the first text, Dr. Ulmer pointed out how Jesus felt **compelled** to journey through the despised country of Samaria to break down centuries-old barriers of hatred, racism, sexism, and religious discrimination. If we are true followers of Jesus, we will feel compelled to do the same.

In the evening meeting, Dr. Ulmer told of earlier days when the children living in a Philadelphia neighborhood where he grew up played a game called, "It" which was essentially a follow-the-leader type game. All the player-followers were to carry out faithfully what the leader did without

"Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting."

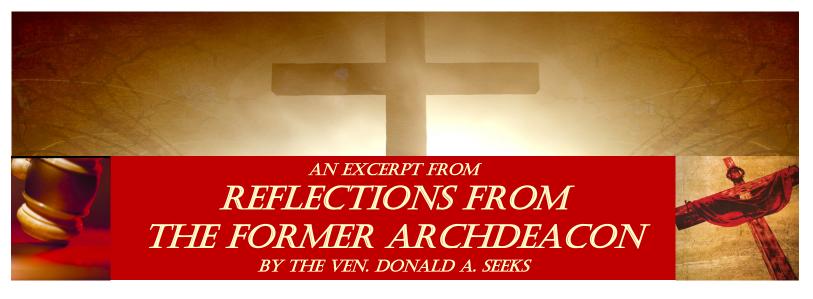
JOHN 4:35, NRSV

mistake. The point is, if we are to follow our leader Jesus because He is the "It," we must determine, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to do exactly as we can the same as Jesus. The Matthew text says that when Jesus saw the crowds, He had **compassion on them**, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said His disciples (and to us if He is our "It"), "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." And in Chapter 10, which is really a continuation of the previous chapter, Jesus sends forth His disciples to do what He has been doing. Living our lives lined up behind Jesus results in the theological principle called "sanctification."

First, we must learn to see as Jesus sees. He sees sheep – not white, not black, not brown sheep, but sheep who are disorganized and helpless because they have no shepherd, that is, spiritual leadership.

There are all too many in the world who are harassed and helpless because they are laboring under loads of depression, poverty, ignorance, drugs, alcohol, abuse, discouragement, loneliness, and they see no way out. Jesus sees them with compassion and so we must learn to see them in the same way. Sheep without a shepherd scatter, and in today's world we see great evidences of disunity and dysfunctionality. It is all too easy to get focused upon our internal denominational differences, our man-made separations from other Christian bodies. So, we present

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no solution to a deeply divided society. We must learn to see the depths of divisions that already exist as Jesus sees them – He sees them as a sinful scandal – then do something about them. In Dr. Ulmer's words: "The 'schisms' and other 'isms' must become 'was-isms." Unrighteousness is rampant; we hear about it and read about it, but do we really see it as Jesus sees it?

Jesus saw another problem and changed the metaphor. It was not a seed problem; the seed of the Gospel had been spread in the land, just as it has in America today. The harvest was not such a problem because there were many who were ripe for harvesting, just as today. The seed represents the Word of God, and of course, there is no problem about that. There is fruit in the harvest. The problem is labor. God has prepared many hearts, but the laborers are absent.

The Greek word for "compassion" used here means literally, "to be shaken," as if in an earthquake. Jesus has that kind of compassion; not mere sympathy, or even apathy, but a "shaken-ness" which requires action to bring about change. If we are to follow Jesus in the various ways in which we are called, we should also be "shaken" with compassion for our brothers and sisters who do not yet know Christ as Savior and Lord, then we must do something about it. Pray that our hearts be moved to compassionate action. We are called to do as He says and as He leads if He is truly our leader, our "It."

Dr. Ulmer says we must pray therefore; but Jesus did not say, "Just pray." We must not be influenced by the world's agenda. Our prayers for every person in every city and town must move us into action.

Ulmer believes too much of today's Church "is stricken with AIDS," in that it has lost its ability to fight off the attacks of the world that would have power over the Church instead of the other way around. "We are called to go to the lost sheep, and as we go, we pray, and become the laborers."



In the morning address, Dr. Ulmer remarked that too many of today's Christians would like to change the words of Isaiah and say, "Here am I; send her or him!" Jesus says, "YOU go!"; you are the answer to your own prayer. Look into a mirror and tell the one you see there to become a laborer. I am reminded of that old hymn "Standing on the Promises."

Make sure we do not change it to "Sitting on the Premises." Follow our Leader; do as He does, as He says, as He has commanded. Step up for Jesus and be His laborer, so none can be lost.

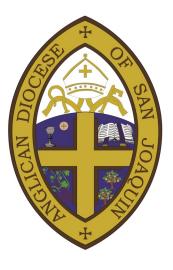




Bishop's Note series--

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Please send these to **melody@ctkridgecrest.org**.

Thank you!