

THE SWORD

Our Monthly Newsletter | Online at StGeorgeAPA.org

The Season of Lent

February 16 - 5:00-8:00 PM
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

February 17 - Noon and 7 PM
Ash Wednesday - The Blessing and Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion

February 27 - 9 AM - Noon
Parish Lenten Quiet Day

Tuesdays and Thursdays -
10:00 AM Morning Prayer

Fridays - 3:00 PM - Stations of the Cross

Holy Week (Mar 29-Apr 3)

Monday -Wednesday - Noon
Eucharist

Maundy Thursday - 7 PM Holy Communion and Stripping of the Altar

Good Friday - Noon - 3:00 PM
The Three Hours Devotion, 7PM
Stations of the Cross and Tenebrae



Why Traditional Anglicanism? (The Lost Chapters) **III. The Work of Salvation**

When one is only beginning to discover the sacred calendar of the ancient church as it is observed today with all of its holy days, its fasts, and its feasts, one may find it somewhat overwhelming. If Christmastide and Easter sound the depths of your practice of holy day observance, then Epiphanytide, Ascension, Rogation days, Ember days, and the hundreds of annual saints days are bound to raise questions. For those who have unknowingly searched for the means of sanctifying time as the years go by, the calendar is a welcome feature of a more catholic spirituality. For many however, the mention of a “day of obligation” like Ash Wednesday or Good Friday, which Christians have no choice but to observe with at least some form of fasting and penitence, the convert to historic Christian practice will

World Relief Presentation

On Sunday, January 24, Saint George's welcomed Corrie McKee from World Relief Upstate for a presentation on that organization's ministry of resettling refugees in Greenville and Spartanburg.



In a thank you card to our members she wrote, "I'm grateful to be connected to a congregation that is so passionate about learning and serving. The donated goods you supply will be a tangible display of hospitality to newly arriving refugees in the future. Thank you for standing with us for the vulnerable and persecuted."

A list of items needed for donation is posted on the door to the first classroom in the parish hall where they may be placed before they are taken to the World Relief Upstate warehouse. Larger donations such as furniture should be OK'd by the World Relief Upstate office and picked up directly from the donor rather than stored at the church.

tend to hesitate. The question "Well, what if I don't?" weighs on the mind of one who was rightly taught that salvation is by faith and not by works.

What's more, the entire season of Lent, in which it seems that all Christians are obligated to engage in good deeds and focused penitence, makes the Protestant convert wonder if catholic Christians just don't understand grace. After all, isn't it true that Christ paid our debt and that there is nothing meaningful that we can do in our salvation apart from believe - and that even belief is God's gift? How can the Church oblige anyone to do anything if we believe in salvation as the free and unmerited gift of God?

It is true that there is a tension at the center of catholic theology concerning the nature of salvation. Opponents of pre-reformation theology have suggested that the tension is no more than a clumsy heresy and it has been given the very simple label of "salvation by works." Since the reformation, no doubt countless millions of Christians were intentionally kept away from pursuing an understanding of catholic theology by clergy who sensed an urgent calling to keep the faithful clear of any presumption that good deeds could merit eternal life. While it is true that



our own good works cannot merit salvation, that notion is also not a true characterization of catholic theology. Perhaps traditional Anglicans (who are accustomed to questions not easily answered!) can of all Christians most appreciate the fact that there is something more nuanced than "works righteousness" at play in the salvation theology of the ancient Church.

This next sentence is going to sound condescending. If you are hoping to be a Christian who is fully awake to the holy scriptures, to historic Christian theology, and to sacred tradition, you will need to make room for paradox. The Christian faith is filled to the brim with the paradoxical, and

Lenten Observance

The observance of a long penitential season like Lent has a number of benefits for the soul. It is just a little bit more than a 10% tithe of our year as we offer to God our time and efforts in special almsgiving, fasting and prayer. Every great feast is preceded by a fast, and Easter is perhaps the greatest feast of all, so just as your mother once told you, "Don't ruin your supper," these things are abstained from so that the Paschal feast can be appreciated all the better.

- "Alleluia" is not said or sung
- "Gloria in Excelsis" is replaced with "O Saving Victim Opening Wide"
- Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are to be observed as days of strict fasting. (Fasting can be reduced for those who are not able, and even changed from food to somethings else, ie. entertainment, treats, etc.)
- Flowers are not allowed in the altar area

Personal observance of Lent involves deciding upon a regimen of discipline usually combining some abstinence and some good work taken on.

so the sooner a Christian understands how to handle both horns of a seeming contradiction, the better.

Before we go any further, we must clarify what we mean by using the word paradox. A paradox is an assertion that contains a seeming contradiction, but yet is still true (ie. less is more, you have to spend money to make money).

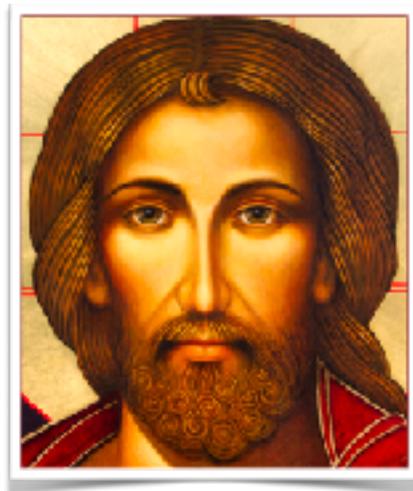


Paradox must not be confused with contradiction.

Contradiction is a logical incongruity - an impossibility (ie. I both did and did not get a parking ticket). A paradox is not a

contradiction for a paradox is not impossible, it only seems to be. The words of saint Paul in Philippians 2:12-13 is just such a paradox. Saint Paul exhorts Christians to "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you ..." That it is God who works in you and yet that you yourself have work to do, is no contradiction. It is a paradox.

If there is resistance built up against the notion that salvation in the Christian faith might be bound up with paradox, let us not begin with salvation then. Let us begin further back. Let us begin with the Trinity. God is one essence, yet three Persons. As the Athanasian Creed states, "So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God." This is a paradox, a seeming contradiction that is nevertheless true. The same kind of paradox exists in Jesus Christ about whom is spoken in the same creed, "Who although He is God and Man; yet He is not two, but one Christ." Here again is paradox, not of passing interest, but of



surpassingly valuable importance to our salvation. Indeed, paradox is at the heart of God and of His means of saving us. Why then should we be surprised to find paradox in the very nature of salvation itself?

Bishop Grundorf Episcopal Visit

Bishop Walter Grundorf and his wife Dr. Mary Grundorf will visit Saint George's on April 18 for confirmations, welcoming of new members, and to make his final visit as our diocesan bishop.

Since this will be his last visit, we would like to find ways to make that visit special. If you would like help putting together a small reception for him to make that day special, please contact Fr. Paul.

Group Funding an Anglican Church Plant in Indiana

A few weeks ago every church in Continuing Anglicanism received a letter from Fr. Richard Tarsitano of the Anglican Catholic Church who is a young clergyman tasked with starting a new mission in Connersville, IN. By reclaiming a once closed Episcopal building and rectory, Fr. Tarsitano hopes that small monthly donations from parishes and individuals all around traditional Anglicanism will aid in successfully establishing Trinity Anglican Church as a new church plant. For more information on support, and to see the beautiful buildings please visit www.TrinityConnersville.com

Paradoxically stated, it is both true that God saves us regardless of our merit, and it is also true that our salvation depends upon what we do. Catholic theology of salvation, in the end, is simply biblical theology that takes the text at face value and refuses to let go of one or the other horns of that dilemma. What does it mean to cling only to one side or the other? On the one hand, to say that salvation depends primarily upon our own efforts is heresy (Pelagianism to be precise) and is condemned by the Church. So much for that. On the other hand, to say that salvation depends entirely upon God's sovereignty regardless of our cooperation is simply incompatible with great swaths of Holy Scripture.

In order to make the scriptures say that God's will is the only true will in the universe, extraordinary gymnastics must be performed in the interpretation of the Bible from Genesis through to Revelation. To read the Bible like that is to insist that the truth is contradictory to the plain sense of scripture. That is to say for instance, that when Jesus suggests in Matthew chapter 25 that people will be judged ultimately on what they do and do not do in their lives, His words are simply true. Likewise, when Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians (*1 Cor. 9:24-27*) that he strives like an athlete to "win the prize" "so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified," his words need no further explanation. Conversely, when Saint Paul insists about God that "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son," (*Romans 8:29*) and that "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us . . ." (*Ephesians 1:4-5*), these things are also, quite simply, true.

Perhaps what would help most at this point in the discussion is to examine for a moment our definition of grace. In the most common Protestant understanding, grace is thought of as the "unmerited favor of God." This definition is most useful in the divine court scene where you, miserable offender, are in the docks and are known by all to be guilty. Nevertheless, by the intervention and unmerited favor of Christ on your behalf, you





Pancake Supper

Shrove Tuesday takes its name from the practice of preparing for the fast of Lent by going to private confession and being "shriven" of sin, as well as the practice of preparing for 40 days of fasting such that dairy, flour, eggs, and meats were "shriven" from the household. Those ingredients made some lovely pancake suppers! Hence, on Tuesday, February 16, from 5-7:30 PM, the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper tradition continues and is open to all!

are declared to be innocent. Without any consideration of your merit, you have been shown the favor of God and, in a sense, your sins have been forgotten. This understanding of justification and grace is sometimes referred to as "forensic." However, the much more ancient understanding of grace, and it should be mentioned, the understanding upon which the logic of the Nicene Creed is based, defines grace as divine life. You are saved by grace, not only because you have been declared righteous, but because you have been made actually righteous by means of God sharing His divine life with you through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. What the Trinity has by nature (perfect love, perfect purity, perfect communion, everlasting life), you participate in by grace. The sacraments of the Church, the means of grace, are offered to you for the nourishment of that grace filled, Spirit filled, divine life of Christ in you. If you cooperate with the grace of God in your life, then you are most naturally destined for eternal life. There is no pretending about you, and God does not simply "forget" that you are a miserable offender. Instead, as Christ dwells in you and shares divine life with you, then you are just and righteous because He is just and



righteous. "Therefore if any

man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). On the other hand, if you persist in frustrating, resisting, and even rejecting Him, neglecting the means of grace and starving the divine life of God in your life, then may God have mercy on your soul. Literally.

Traditional Anglicans say along with historic catholic theology that somehow the paradox is true, that God is all knowing of the future, and yet we, in His image and likeness, also have freedom to act in this world. What's more, our actions of either cooperation or rejection of grace have a meaningful effect on our eternal destiny. Technically speaking, we are talking about the difference between monergism (only God is at work in the universe and our work is illusory) and synergism (our actions are real and our salvation depends on our cooperation with Him). That the nature of salvation described in the plain reading of the entirety of scripture is that of synergism is an unapologetically held position of Traditional Anglicanism. Cooperation with God has been the salvation theology of the majority of the Christian Church for most of the Church's history. An effort filled fasting season like Lent which culminates in the feast of the Resurrection Day is the perfect image of synergism, for Easter is God's intervention on our

behalf which raises us from death by our participation in Christ's divine life. Should every Christian want to participate in that story from its beginning to its end by observing both Lent and Easter? Absolutely!

I remember sitting down to dinner as a guest of a truly gracious Presbyterian scholar whose family knew that I was pursuing ordination in the Anglican church. Their adult daughter was studying apologetics at the time and wanted to test her chops on me by questioning the observance of Lent. She was quickly hushed by her father, suggesting to her that it is rude to stir up controversy with a guest. However, I had the distinct impression that she was quieted based on the presumption that the observance of Lent was a precious but misguided practice of mine that would not stand up to the rigorous theological pressure of the educated Presbyterian mind. I was being saved from the embarrassment of suddenly realizing that I had wandered into synergistic salvation theology. In short, I was being spared from hearing that Lent is an Anglican hold-over from a pre-reformation works-based error. The fasting, abstinence, prayer, and almsgiving of Lent are misguided and ultimately contradictory to the true gospel of grace. I was being spared the shame of learning, at that dinner where I was a guest, that people like me who earnestly observe Lent will only be saved by God in spite of our blinkered ignorance about grace the free gift of God.

Well, a visitor to the traditional Anglican Church will hopefully find many good deeds being meaningfully done. God willing they will see church services regularly attended, the fasts and feasts of the church year observed, and the sacraments partaken of. People should be bowing, genuflecting, and making the sign of the cross. The kneelers should be knelt upon and the entire liturgy ought to be wholeheartedly participated in. At the end of the service the priest should exclaim, "Depart in peace to love and serve the Lord!" with full expectation that this is precisely what would be done until the next time the faithful gather. This kind of Christian life that demands action to be taken is not an expression of disbelief in the grace or sovereignty of God. Rather, it is an expression of belief that the exhortations and examples of the bible are real calls to action. It is an expression that the means of grace provided for us are to be partaken of so that the divine life of Christ in us retains its vitality. "Well what if I don't?" is just the wrong question. And, though paradoxical, this cooperation with the grace of God is an expression of faith, not that salvation is by works, but that God is at once in full control, that He has shared His life with us by His sovereign will, and yet that He will one day give His beloved a very meaningful rest from their earnest and fruitful labors.

Fr. Paul Rivard+



Organic Organist Re-Organization

Towards the end of 2020, our beloved Choirmaster and Organist of many years, Lois Schneider, decided that December would be her last month before retiring. We thank Lois for the years of service at the organ which she shared with her husband Bill who led the choir, and also for the years Lois bravely took on both tasks after Bill passed away.

By God's providence, our new organist, Bob Glick, had begun attending Saint George's at the Wednesday Eucharist about 6 months earlier and when offered the newly open position, joyfully accepted. Welcome Bob!