

The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter

The Right Reverend Donald M. Ashman

Mid-December 2024

Episcopal Visitation to Saint Thomas San Francisco



On November Twenty-fourth, the Sunday next before Advent, Suffragan Bishop Scott D. Mitchell visited and confirmed at Saint Thomas Anglican Church in San Francisco. Shown with the Bishop Mitchell and Canon Richard McNeeley (*Vicar and Diocesan Chancellor*) are the Confirmands Claire Kwon and Jack Conrad.

The Meaning of Advent

Many look upon Jesus only as the suffering servant, not as the Judge of History before whom we must all stand. I am constantly haunted by Michelangelo's magnificent painting of the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Christ is shown as the eternal judge over all [with] horns trumpeting the end of time. I shall never forget one man's face, full of dread, expressing his horror when it dawns on him that he is among the damned, as though he suddenly realized that it is really all true. God whom he had consciously denied, rationalized away, is very real. It is all true. The grief of our time is the grieving grayness in the faces of youth, the nihilism caused by the loss of faith, and the resulting hatred of life. There is little joy. One wonders why the churches are empty, but it is because so many bishops and priests have tried to overthrow our society and civilization and have replaced it with nothing. Hell is made of nothingness. Hell is life without God. Hell is being unable to love. We are returning to paganism. Man believes only in what he desires, doing what he wants, and taking what he wants, with no accountability. The judgment in the pagan world, both ancient and modern, is a meaningless death, the endless abyss. Michelangelo shows the finger of God giving life to Adam. He shows the woman reaching for Christ's garment, reaching to touch Christ. The judgment of time is time, for by their fruits ye shall know them. The ultimate judgment of God is eternal life with Him or eternal death with yourself. Today we are caught in a great agony of spirit. The illusion possessing our time is that we are on the verge of a breakthrough, a change in human nature, that the next generation is going to be different.

+RSM

Episcopal Visitation to Saint Mark's Portland



On December Eighth, the Second Sunday in Advent (Bible Sunday), Bishop Ashman visited the Parish of Saint Mark, preaching, celebrating the Mass and baptizing Mr. James Cruse. (left to right): Leo Connor (Acolyte), Bishop Ashman, Mr. Cruse, Joni Armstrong (Senior Warden) and Tom Ruminski (Acolyte). Although the High Altar at St. Mark's is breathtaking, the Lady Altar is a beautiful jewel.

Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary Classes

In January, the Seminary will offer the second half of Archbishop's Schultz's Survey of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Bishop Ashman will continue his Friday Latin and Greek classes along with a class in World History and Religion from Egypt to the conclusion of the Byzantine (East Roman Empire) on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. Pacific Time and a new seminar focusing on *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis on Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time. All course offerings are either credit or audit.

The cost per course is \$250.00 for credit and \$50.00 for audit. Laity are encouraged to attend. Please address any requests for tuition relief to the Provost at bishopashman@gmail.com. When you sign up for your course(s), please send your registration (below) to the following: the Provost (Bishop Ashman): bishopashman@gmail.com. Send your tuition and another copy of your registration to Canon Matthew Weber at 2316 Bowditch P.O. Box 40020 Berkeley, CA 94704 or saintannchapel@gmail.com



Saint Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological Seminary SPRING SEMESTER 2024 REGISTRATION (HARD COPY OR EMAIL)

Name:

Address:

Email:

Cell Phone:

Parish:

Parish Priest:

Please list the courses you wish to audit or take for credit

Provincial Anglican Church Women

As was stated in the early December issue, the Provincial Anglican Church Women are inviting you to be part of a fund-raiser to help defray the REFURBISHING FUND for the New Oxford & Morse (Front) House at Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary. The building is over one hundred years old and needs some major repairs such as roofing, walls, floors and stairs. This fundraiser is easy. Just fill out the form below, write a check and you are done! No cookies to back, friends to be coerced, or functions to attend!

- _____ \$15 I do not bake, so here is the money I would have spent on baking cookies, cakes pies, candy or jam.
- _____ \$25 I do not want to ask family, friends or co-workers to buy baked goods, so here is the money I would have spent on boxes, jars, wrapping paper and ribbon.
- _____ \$50 I do not want to walk, jog, swim or run in any activity that has the suffix -thon in it, so here is the money I would have spent on a "free" t-shirt.
- _____ \$75 I do not want to attend any Spaghetti, Tri tip or Crab Feed, so here is the money I would have spent filling a table to attend.
- _____ \$100 I do not want to attend any fancy balls or banquets, so here is the money I would have spent on a new outfit.
- _____ \$ I am making this donation to express my appreciation for having nothing to buy, sell or do except fill out this form and send a check.

Name _____

Church _____

Phone _____

email _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Provincial ACW
(with notation: New Oxford House Refurbishing Fund)
Nona Gourley, Provincial ACW President
2038 Carlsbad Caverns Court
Newman, CA 95360

A Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent

Fifteen years ago, when I was teaching Latin in a public high school, I was ready after lunch to begin my Latin Literature class, but I realized that two of my lower achieving (but wonderful) students were missing. Finally, they came in late with teary eyes and so, (armed with a box of Kleenex) I let them go into a teachers' room situated in the middle of four classrooms. When class was over, I went to the teachers' room and there they were on the floor with their backs propped up against the wall; with what seemed like gazillions of tissues at their feet; and sad faces with red, swollen eyes.

I asked them what was wrong; they told me it was their A. P. Biology class; they felt that they had tried so hard; they studied so much; but all they received was failure; and what hurt most was that in their panic to do well, they turned some right answers into wrong ones. Then came more tears! One girl told me that her dad had died last summer; a thousand questions were answered about her in that moment; she was a nice kid; but not always there (alert); sometimes mischievous; all that now made sense. The other girl had not seen her dad for a decade and her mom was demanding and unsympathetic. She was in terror because report cards would come before Christmas. She was now more a person – she was more human.

In my mind I struggled to find the right words; I realized that I had no right words. The best gift I could give them was to listen – and listen some more. They felt, **(NO!)** they knew that they could do better, but I asked myself if they were in over their heads; well, their tears slowly dried and they found the door, but I asked myself if I could have done more. They came to class the next day and bore up well; but I wasn't so sure. Then I sat down on Saturday to prepare my sermon for Advent III, and I thought about how much sin and selfishness were parallel my two students' red and swollen eyes. We try so hard; we try so hard! And yet we sin so much. We let the death of a loved one hurt us so much even when we say we believe in the Resurrection. Oh, how our own sins hurt! And the sins of others: how much more they hurt. The girls knew what they had to do: they had to grow up; they had to work harder; they had to bloom in spite of the pain. How many of us see sin in that light? Do we know what we have to do? Do we ever weep over our sins? Do we know that we must grow up spiritually?

In the Gospel Jesus said to John's disciples, *the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Those two girls; whom I had known for four years – ever since Latin One, are icons of the human dilemma; the human spiritual dilemma. And that dilemma is the choice between selfish childishness and spiritual growing up. Our pain is great, but Jesus is close at hand; we cry but comfort is also close at hand. Jesus helps us to see our faults; He holds up our stumbling feet; He cleanses us from our sins; He offers us life, now and eternally; He helps us to listen; He tells us the good news of God's love; and all that He asks is that we not be offended in Him; that we give Him a chance; that we try to do His works.

Advent is a beautiful season because it teaches us that the joy of Christmas is near; a joy that cannot be found in "things" and parties but in the human heart that prepares to meet the Saviour. (Then the "things" and parties can truly be fun because they have been put into proper perspective) Advent teaches us that the answer to the pains and hurts of sin will soon be born; as the Introit says, *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice; let your moderation be known unto all men; **the Lord is at hand.*** We are almost to Bethlehem; the rose candle is lit. He will come. The manger is set up. Our Saviour will soon come with answers. He will not slap down our enemies, but He will give us power to overcome our own faults and turn our wrong answers into right answers. He will not wave a magic wand and end all the problems created by sin (that would obviate the necessity of free will), but He will help us to find virtue, peace and joy in our own hearts. He will not come to reign over an earthly kingdom but will reign over the earth in the hearts of His faithful soldiers and servants.