

The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter

The Right Reverend D. M. Ashman

February 2026

So Run - A Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday

I'm not much of a runner. I run like a bear. I don't like to get hit. It hurts. And my hands hurt when I hit someone. I did little fighting as a kid. I was too tall. People looked up and thought better of fighting me. I did learn boxing fundamentals, though. Frankie Van was a ring official. He appeared in boxing movies as a ref with his white shirt and bow tie. He had a gym with exercise equipment and punching bags. I put on the gloves. He showed me the stance, balance, jab, cross and uppercut. We went a round or two and, to his shock, I landed one on his chin. My entire career: I got one punch on Frankie Van.

So when St. Paul talks about running and boxing, I know little beyond Olympic races and Monday night fights. The objective of running is to win a prize. You may know that you're outmatched, but you don't run with that idea. You hear the gun, start pumping, spring forward and move fast as you can, looking down the lane until you see the tape and stretch for it. You're going for gold.

Our prize is heaven, and we place too low a value on that objective sometimes. People seem to see heaven as the consolation prize for having to live down here. It's just better than that other unmentionable place, so we'll settle for heaven. Hollywood's heaven is togas, stage wings, and Roman sandals in a dry ice cloud—an ad for Valium. Nothing is like that: I guarantee. Heaven is more like 100,000 fans in the Coliseum cheering you. You're a hero. You used everything you had, then stretched for more. And you did it. Everybody loves you. Everybody loves you. Not just for a moment either. Everybody goes on loving you and cheering your victory. On this earth, few people feel that kind of sustained approval. Most are ruined by it and have to keep impressing themselves and others. Not in heaven. Thank God, we're purified of our old hankering for applause.

The high judge has ruled: *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* That's the prize. Everything else you did, all your errors in judgment, misadventures, gifts offered to unworthy objects, lost weekends and hours of wasted time doing nothing—all these are gone, with even the memory of guilt, because God has taken you up and called you faithful. There are worthy goals we work for. We bring home a check. We sing to bring others pleasure. We serve others to make their lives happy. We give of ourselves to fulfill the lives of people. We also eat, sleep, and wash in order to stay alive. Life's more than rest.

There is a silly religious tenet that says only faith means anything to God: all our works are only the motions of pride. Yes, it is by faith we are saved. But faith, as St. James says, when it stands alone doesn't prove a thing. Peter had faith that he might walk on the water with Jesus, but it didn't mean a thing until he stepped off the boat. Likewise, works without faith mean nothing either.

St. Paul says, *"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* **1 Cor 9:26-27** You don't just take a few swipes at your opponent then let your guard down. You don't just run a few paces down the track and call it good. There is a finish line, one small step for a man but a giant leap for mankind. Our lives must be lived every day; our hearts never miss a beat, our breath maintaining its rhythmic pumping of air, in and out. We don't stop. When we've broken that tape, and the crowds begin to cheer—we shall feel a flood of relief and joy, and the very truest meaning of our life will eclipse the tears and pain and shadows that went before. Well done. You win. Congratulations. Welcome home, forever.

+ Peter F. Hansen

DWS Synod: Notes and Reminders

- + Try to Remember to send or bring items for the Bishop's Auction to help clergy get to Synod. Call Nona Gourley (209-324-5009 – note this is Nona's cell and her only phone because she no longer has a land line) or Gillian Golden (541-597-4270) for the ACW Drawing.
- + Be sure to get your registration forms in as soon as possible and make your hotel reservations to the hotel (reem.najdawi@hilton.com; 1-925-934-2500 – select option 4 for the sales office). Call or text Nona for more information.
- + On Tuesday at St. Joseph's we will have a noon Eucharist, hosted lunch by the ladies of Saint Joseph's, an altar guild workshop with Carol Karcher and Bishop Ashman, lessons and silent meditation and a Sung Evensong with Canon Weber. More details will follow.
- + Of your generosity, please send contributions for Support of Synod. So far, Canon Paul and Mrs. Sara Russell, Father Glenn and Carol Karcher, Church of Our Saviour and the Holy Apostles CA, Holy Cross OK, Saint Paul's CA, and Saint Jude's OR. We will update next month. Your donations are greatly appreciated. Wow! We are off to a good start. Thank you!
- + Canon Larry Shaddix of Saint Francis of Assisi (Livermore) and Saint Paul's (Newman) will lead the Synod Workshop at 10:00 a.m., Thursday April 23rd, on conducting Bible Studies at the Embassy Suites.

From St. James, Broomfield (Denver) Colorado



Father Daniel Canda and Lay Reader Murray Watt

ACW-DWS Notes, February 2026

Thank you to all the churches that have sent in their annual ACW dues, and a gentle reminder to those that have not that we do need the paperwork and the checks as soon as possible so that the Provincial ACW Yearbook can be printed before the Synods. I know that some ACW Groups do not have their annual meetings until February, but please send the form and check in as soon as you have the details to Gillian Golden, ACW-DWS President, P.O. Box 558, Selma, OR 97538-0558.

Please also remember to order your Lenten Mite Boxes in time for Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Order forms have gone out to all the churches, or you can email me gillian.golden@yahoo.com let me know how many boxes you want, and where to send them, and I will get them in the mail. Last year, we raised \$2,249.81, which goes to Student Support at St. Joseph of Arimathea Seminary. Do not forget that the next recipient may be someone from your parish! Let us aim for over \$3000 this year!

The 2026 Synod of the Diocese of Western States will be held from April 21st to April 25th at Embassy Suites Hotel, 1345 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA. The ACW lunch and conference will be held on Thursday, April 23rd, and those of you who live in the San Francisco Bay area but are unable to attend the whole Synod are urged to try attend our lunch and conference. It is such a good opportunity to meet members from other churches, and to exchange ideas. We will be having our annual Drawings to raise money for Bishop Morse Youth Camp, so please send pictures and descriptions of your items to me (gillian.golden@yahoo.com) no later than March 16th so we have time to make the brochure and get it and tickets out to the churches before Easter.

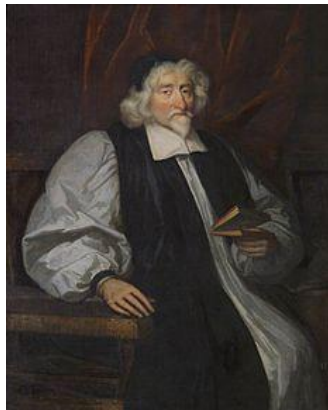
Any small items you might have for the Welcome Bags can be sent to Michelle Henderer, 2725 Vine Drive, Livermore, CA 94550, reaching her no later than April 7th so that she has time to get the bags together. Michelle is the new President of St. Francis of Assisi church ACW, and I know you will be all very happy to welcome her to our ranks.

Tickets for this beautiful, framed, hand cross-stitched piece by Carol Karcher will be available soon. Tickets are \$5.00 each, and the drawing for a winner will take place at the Synod Banquet on April 24. The proceeds will go towards scholarships at St. Joseph of Arimathea Theological College. We congratulate Carol on her superb embroidery and are extremely grateful for her generous contribution.



Gillian Golden, President ACW-DWS

Did you Know...



...that A Prayer for *All Conditions of Men* used at Morning and Evening Prayer is attributed to the Reverend Dr. Peter Gunning (1614 – 1684) of Saint John's College Cambridge and later Bishop of Chichester and subsequently Bishop of Ely. Dr. Gunning was both a royalist and high churchman; and well read in the church fathers and the Ecumenical Councils. In this prayer he prayed for his puritan rivals and royalists allies alike in these beautiful words: "*More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.*" All three American Prayer Books have always included the *Prayer for all Conditions of Men*.

A Sermon for Sexagesima Sunday

There is a story told about a young hiker in the 1930s who was exploring the foothills of the French Alps. The land was covered with an incredible oak forest and higher up pine trees dotted the landscape. It was beautiful! Then to his dismay he came upon a vast stretch of barren land, burned and desolate. It was ugly and reminded him of the horrible battlefields of World War I. Then, suddenly, he stopped in his tracks. In the middle of this vast wasteland was a bent over old man. On his back was a sack of acorns. In his hand was a four-foot-length of iron pipe. The young man watched in fascination as the old man used his iron pipe to punch holes into the ground and then take an acorn from his bag and put it in the hole. Then he would tamp down the hole with dirt and move on to a new spot and repeat the process.

The young man approached the old man and asked what he was doing. The old man replied that he was planting acorns and that he figured that over the last ten years he had planted over 100,000 of them. He said, "I have been blessed in many ways and have had a comfortable life. I survived the slaughter of the Great War without a scratch. I was fortunate in business. So when my children were grown and when my wife died, I wanted to give something back. I know that only a few of these acorns may ever grow to maturity, but if only a few do, it will have been worth it." "But don't you know that you will never live to see these seeds mature?" said the young man. The old man replied, "That's not the point, is it? The point is to give, to give back for what I have received" The young man marveled and went on; but did not understand and after an hour or so was back in another oak forest - and forgot.

After World War II, that same young man, now approaching middle age, was again on vacation in the French Alps. He remembered the old man with his acorns and iron pipe. He wondered if any of the acorns had grown up. So he took his family and set out on that trail of thirty years ago. The oak forests and the pine trees were as beautiful as he had remembered but when he came to the place where the old man had planted the acorns he was overcome with emotion for what he saw was a wasteland transformed into a beautiful forest, with birds singing, deer and other animals in abundance and flowers everywhere. And so he told his family about his about the old man and how a wasteland was transformed because someone cared; someone who never lived to see the results of his labors.

So the acorns and the seed in today's Sexagesima Gospel represent the word of God. The old man represents the workers in the vineyard who spend their lives working for the kingdom. The young man represents those whose eyes are being opened to their responsibilities as workers in the vineyard. Isn't it interesting that last Sunday we were instructed about how important it is to work in the vineyard and to plant those seeds; and how God uses those laborers who come early or late into the mystery of Divine Providence? And Next Sunday, the young man will be represented by blind Bartimaeus who, when asked by Jesus what he wants, says, "Lord, that I may see." When the middle-aged man sees the acorn forest he is Bartimaeus and he is given his sight. He understands what he had never understood.

Therefore the beautiful forest, which of course symbolizes eternal paradise, was the result of the care and persistence of the old man just as the fruits of the vineyard are the result of the care of the laborers in the vineyard. As laborers, we are the young man; we are the old man. Sometimes we complain about our compensation; sometimes we do not see the importance of our labor. But on the other hand, sometimes like the old man, we do see the importance of our labor, and we work happily, not looking back and not complaining about the eternal joy that is ours. Moreover, we are both the seed and the acorns; we can be choked with the cares and pleasures and riches of this world, or we can be fickle or fall away in times of temptation; or we can bring forth fruit to perfection. And it all depends on our willingness to follow our Saviour; it all depends on our getting out of ourselves and working for the kingdom; it all depends on loving our neighbor as ourselves; it all depends on bending over in the hot sun and planting those seeds that sprout into a beautiful forest and the Kingdom of Heaven. *+dma*

A Pastoral Letter from the Council of Bishops

January 29, 2026

Dear Laity and Clergy of the Anglican Province of Christ the King,

We, the Council of Bishops, want to advise you that Archbishop Blair William Schultz has suffered serious medical issues and is taking a leave of absence until such time as he can resume his duties. In the meantime the Council of Bishops will collegially undertake the Archbishop's duties. If you have questions, concerns or needs, please contact any of the Bishops of the province.

Bishop Ashman, Ordinary, Western States [818-749-8139, bishopashman@gmail.com]

Bishop Jones, Suffragan for the Ordinary of the Atlantic States [bishop.benjones@gmail.com]

Bishop Hansen, Coadjutor, Western States [fatherhansen@gmail.com]

Bishop Mitchell, Suffragan, Western States [707-318-4515 or fireanalysis@att.net]

Bishop Wiygul, Bishop Emeritus, Southern States [wwiygul@aol.com 205-995-9217]

May we all pray for the return of health to Archbishop Schultz

