

The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter

The Right Reverend D. M. Ashman

October 2026

A Lay Reader's Perspective

Before getting into the actual passage, it is important to distinguish what grace, faith, and works mean. Simply put, grace is God's loving invitation, nudge, and gift to believe in Him. Faith is the internal love and trust in God. Works are that trust in action, whether that be reading the Bible, praying nightly, helping someone in need, or spreading the Word. These three components are all intertwined in Christian theology.

In Matthew 20:4–7 (CSB), after the landowner offered the first group of workers one denarius for work in the vineyard and found another group of workers: “⁴ He said to them, ‘You also go into my vineyard, and I’ll give you whatever is right.’ So off they went. ⁵ About noon and about three, he went out again and did the same thing.” Notice he did not offer them one denarius, just “what is right.” Those workers put faith in the landowner and put their works into the vineyard. The first group had more of a contractual agreement, whereas the others had more of a faithful agreement. So, it did not matter so much how long they were working; rather, it mattered that they put in faith and works at all. With those groups, he showed grace to them. They did not have any job before the landowner invited them to work in the vineyard.

At the end, when the landowner paid all the workers one denarius, even though each group worked different hours, according to Matthew 20:13–16 (CSB): “¹³ He replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I’m doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me on a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what’s yours and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with what is mine? Are you jealous because I’m generous?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.” The landowner saw the faith and works that the vineyard workers put in. He could have handed out different wages, but he showed grace and gave them all an equal amount.

Remember, the workers didn’t have to go to the vineyard in the first place. If they didn’t go, then not only would they not have worked, but they would not have trusted the landowner when he said, “I’ll give you whatever is right.” And finally, they would not have been shown grace from him. Anybody would be suspicious of that, because what exactly is “whatever is right?” But they went anyway.

What did I take away from this? Works do not lead to faith, but rather, faith leads to works. In this world, there are people who do what we consider good things—charity, feeding the poor, whatever it may be—but they do not put that trust in God. That trust in God leads to good works, which then retain and/or strengthen that trust. Because of this, I think faith and works are two sides of the same coin. This flows into God’s grace, deepening our belief in Him. Think of yourself by a flowing river, throwing a coin into the water. The coin represents faith and works, while the river represents grace. The coin is constantly moving along the river. The river is the moving force. Grace is what surrounds your faith and works, giving them direction, momentum, and life.

Robbie Messer, Lay Reader at Saint Paul’s Missionary Chapel

Submitted by Canon Larry Shaddix

Provincial Anglican Church Women- APCK

Nona Gourley, Provincial ACW President

September 20, 2026

Dear Archbishop, Bishops and Diocesan ACW Presidents:

Enclosed please find check #2520 for the 2026 Lenten Offerings in the amount of \$2,796.65. The Lenten donations in the year 2026 will benefit St. Joseph's Seminary Student Support, and those who have donated will be remembered at the altar of St. Joseph of Arimathea Chapel at the seminary. Below is a list of parishes which supported the 2026 Lenten Offering Project. Thanks.

PARISHES/MISSIONS/CHAPELS IN THE APCK PARTICIPATING IN THE 2026 LENTEN OFFERING

Diocese of the Atlantic States

\$ 1,000.00 All Saints Anglican Church, Tulsa, OK
\$ 68.05 St. Alban's, Lady Lake, FL
\$ 165.00 St. Thomas Aquinas, Montgomery, AL
\$1,233.05 Total DAS 2026

Diocese of the Western States

\$ 435.33 Church of the Atonement, Fountain Hills, AZ
\$ 235.58 Church of Our Saviour, Santa Barbara, CA
\$ 53.25 St. Ann Chapel, Palo Alto, CA
\$ 98.17 St. Augustine's, Chico, CA
\$ 53.86 St. Bartholomew, Woodinville, WA
\$ 459.91 Saint George, Las Vegas, NV
\$ 25.00 St. Joseph's Chapel, Berkeley, CA
\$ 102.50 St. Jude's, Grants Pass, OR
\$100.00 St. Paul's Missionary Chapel, Newman, CA
\$1,563.60 Total DWS 2026

2026 Lenten Offering

\$1,233.05 DAS
1 563.60 DWS
\$2,796.65 Total 2025 Lenten Donation

Faithfully,

Nona Gourley

A Sermon for Saint Michael and All Angels

If you take nothing else from the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, take this: We are fighting a war that has already been won. There was war in heaven, says the lesson from Revelation. Past tense. Michael and his angels fought. Past tense. And then the tense shifts in a loud voice. Present tense: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down. The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. We know that time is not the same here as it is in Heaven. We know that Satan and his armies have been defeated by the angels of God. And we also know that Satan is alive and well on planet earth.

Have you ever heard a voice in your head, often in the small hours of the night. “You are unworthy. You are not enough. God doesn’t need you.” I’ve heard it. It’s the voice of the devil. And it sounds a lot like me. My voice. In Hebrew, the word *satan* means accuser. He’s the prosecutor—a cosmic district attorney who builds a case against every believer, cataloguing sins, rehearsing failures, presenting evidence for the prosecution. He does this “day and night,” the text says — without rest, without ceasing, without mercy. And when he calls for testimony in our ongoing trial the star witness is the accused. “I’ve done that. I failed. I sinned. Look at what I’ve done. Look at who I really am.” We see examples of this time and again in the Bible. Isaiah 6:5: *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* Isaiah’s unclean lips were purged with a live coal off God’s altar. God did not excuse sin, he purified the sinner.

In the third chapter of Zecharia, Joshua the high priest stands before God “clothed in filthy garments” and the devil is right beside him pressing charges. And God’s answer was not to debate the evidence. The answer was to change the garments. God did not excuse sin, He covered it. And here’s the good news: the prosecutor has been thrown out of court. He no longer has access to the Judge. Not because we are innocent, not because we have been purified or our sin has been covered, but because the penalty for my sin and for yours has been paid by Another. The Blood of the Lamb, the Blood of Jesus Christ, has answered every charge. And that means we no longer have to do the prosecutor’s work for him. But many if not most of us still do. How many of God’s people live under a crushing weight of self-condemnation — replaying failures, rehearsing sins, refusing to accept the forgiveness that has already been granted? Continuing to harken to that voice: “You are unworthy. You are not enough. God does not need you.”

A lot of Christians are people who have been convicted and sentenced and then received a pardon from the King. They walk out of prison free. And every night in the small hours they put the chains back on and return to their cells and sit down, convinced prison is where they belong. If that’s you, I urge you to use the Feast of Saint Michael as an opportunity to remember that the accuser is cast down. Quit confessing that same sin over and over. Repent, leave it at the foot of the Cross, and move on to the next battle. Yes, there’s always a next battle because we are at war. This morning’s lesson from Revelation pulls back the curtain on that war. There is a dragon and he is fighting and there are legions of angels engaged on our behalf—on God’s behalf.

The war’s been won but the battle is still underway. And the battle is not abstract. It shows up in the ordinary Monday morning when you are tempted to believe that your work doesn’t matter, that your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, that God is busy with more important people. It shows up when you are exhausted and discouraged and the thought comes that maybe all of this — the liturgy, the sacraments, the discipline of showing up for Church — maybe all of this is just ritual.

That is not a neutral thought. That is the enemy, and he is doing exactly what the text says he does: accusing. Not from the throne room anymore — he's been thrown out of that — but from the shadows. From the small hours of the night. From the back of your mind where that old shame still lives. He does not come with a pitchfork and a red suit. He comes with reasonable-sounding excuses. He comes with distractions that feel harmless. He comes with the slow, quiet suggestion that prayer is a waste of time, that the Daily Office is just words on a page, that your daily Bible reading is just too hard, that confession is unnecessary because you already know what you've done and God is tired of hearing it. He comes with the lie that you can manage this on your own, that you don't need the sacraments, that you don't really need the Church. And if he can get you to believe that — if he can get you to skip one Sunday, then another, then another — he has done his work without ever raising his voice.

We live in a world that has decided angels are quaint and devils are imaginary. The modern mind has no classification for what Revelation is describing. We are told that faith is a private comfort, something you practice on Sunday morning if it helps you, like therapy, or a 12-step program, or meditation, or a good walk in the woods. The Church is treated as a social club with better music and older buildings. But the Church celebrates Saint Michael and All Angels not to encourage curiosity about the supernatural. We observe this feast to wake us up. The war is real. The enemy is real. And the forces arrayed against you — against your marriage, against your children, against your sobriety, against your faith, against your peace of mind — are not merely psychological. They are spiritual. And they require a spiritual answer.

Our faith is not a private comfort. It is a battlefield. We don't come to church to feel good about ourselves and to experience community. We come to church to be strengthened for battle, fed with the Body and Blood of Christ. The same Blood that has overcome the accuser. And here's a final thought. We do not fight this war for victory. We fight this war from victory. We are called to stand firm on the ground Saint Michael and his armies have won for us. And the first ground to hold is your conscience. The accuser is cast down. Quit cooperating with him. Quit testifying against yourself. You are forgiven. You are washed in the Blood. Stand and fight. Be not afraid. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Father Charles Newcomb Holy Cross, Oklahoma City

If you don't know who God is, you don't know who you are.

The Industrial Revolution, in spite some positive aspects, disrupted the agricultural communal life of Western man. In the midst of today's technological revolution, modern man is increasingly losing a sense of who he is, the value of the personal, of life itself, and of God's essence, interpersonal love. This is particularly poignant as we lose our sense of identity. Young men and women are increasingly confused about gender roles and, as religious values disappear, a sense of vocation in work and commitment disappears as well. The beginning of the religious experience is the emotional acceptance of one's self. It starts when we admit to ourselves (which is hard to do) that what we want in life is to love and be loved. I often hear young men ask whether they can love at all. They wake in the night and ask, what is my life all about? How can I handle my fears of the unknown? Must I disappear into the void? In this frightening hour we search for more than friends, family, goals, possessions, achievements, companies, or clubs. We seek the absolute, God. For some, there is a "Road to Damascus" experience that leads to God, but for most of us, how do we find Him? We know Him in those rare moments when we loved and were loved. We recall those times when we were caught up in something so wonderful, so beautiful, that we forgot ourselves and experienced the transfiguring glory of falling in love with life, touched by God. Fear is replaced with an indefinable mystery, a love for Him, the source of life, Jesus.

+RSM

A Sermon for Trinity XVII

This week, while thinking about our homily, I happened to receive Taylor Caldwell's 1959 novel *Dear and Glorious Physician*, about Saint Luke. In her foreword, Caldwell explains that the book had been a lifelong project. She first became interested in Saint Luke when she was about twelve years old and attempted a version of the story again in her twenties. She returned to it repeatedly before finally publishing it many years later. The depth of her research, together with material gathered during her husband's travels in the Holy Land, shows that this was much more to her than simply another successful novel. We may glimpse what she believed about that work in the epigraph she chose from Epictetus: "Surely God chooses His servants at birth, or perhaps even before birth." Caldwell seems to have believed that she had been given a particular vocation—to tell the story of Saint Luke.

A Calling Received: That idea of a calling given before we fully understand it brings us naturally to today's lessons. Caldwell draws an interesting parallel between Saint Luke and Saint Paul. Neither knew Jesus during His earthly ministry. Paul encountered Him in glory on the road to Damascus. Luke came to know Him through the witness of those who had seen, heard, and followed Him. Paul received the Gospel by revelation; Luke received it through careful investigation and faithful companionship with the Church. Neither man began by occupying the obvious place of honour. Paul began as a persecutor of Christ's people. Luke was not one of the Twelve and did not stand among those who had followed Jesus through Galilee. Yet both were chosen to serve. Their authority did not arise from pushing themselves forward. It came from receiving the place God gave them.

The Cup of Salvation: I am reminded of Psalm 116's wording regarding those who put pride of position over the humility of service. The Psalmist asks, "What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?" His answer is not that he can repay God as an equal. He says, "I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord." He repays God by receiving. He receives the cup of salvation, gives thanks, and calls upon the Lord's Name. That is the posture of humility. We do not manufacture a gift worthy of God. We receive what God gives, and then offer thanksgiving. This is also the meaning of the Eucharist. The ancient Church understood the Eucharistic meal first as thanksgiving for the gifts God had provided. The word Eucharist itself means thanksgiving. We bring bread and wine, but these gifts have first come from God. We offer ourselves, but our very lives are received from Him. At the altar, therefore, we do not claim a place; we are invited to one.

Spiritual Dropsy: Saint Luke's Gospel gives us the same truth in another form. Our Lord notices how the guests choose the highest places at the feast. He warns them not to exalt themselves, lest they be humiliated, but to take the lower place and wait to be called higher. That is not merely advice about social manners. It is a picture of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is not seized. It is received. The place of honour is not claimed by the person who thinks he deserves it, but given by the master of the feast. And before our Lord teaches about the banquet, He heals a man suffering from dropsy. The order is significant. First comes the swollen body; then comes the warning about the swollen soul. The Psalmist says of the proud, "*Their eyes swell with fatness.*" Pride is a kind of spiritual swelling. The self becomes enlarged until we can no longer see clearly. We see other people as rivals, inferiors, or obstacles. We see our own gifts as possessions rather than mercies. We forget that everything we have has been received. The opposite of pride is not self-hatred. It is truth. Humility is seeing ourselves accurately before God: dependent, sinful, gifted, called, and loved. It is knowing that whatever place we have in the Church, in the world, or in eternity will be given by grace.

Called Higher: Saint Paul had to be humbled before he could understand his vocation. Saint Luke had to receive the testimony of others before he could become its faithful recorder. The Psalmist had to ask what reward he could possibly give unto the Lord before discovering that the proper answer was to receive the cup of salvation. And so we come to the altar. We do not come because we have earned the first place. We come because Christ has invited us. We receive the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord. We take the lower place, and we wait for God to say, *“Friend, go up higher.”* There will be glory, but it will be the glory of grace. The face of Christ will humble us more deeply than we now imagine, even as it raises us higher than any dream. The last shall be first—not because the last have forced their way forward, but because the Lord, in His mercy, has called them. Let us pray that God’s grace may go before us and follow us, making us continually ready for the good works to which he calls us. Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father Philip Ternahan

Orate Fratres

- + Keep Father Paul Hauge of Saint Peter’s Oakland in your prayers. Monty Stanford reports that he has moved to San Leandro Senior Living, 348 W. Juana Avenue, Apt. 9, San Leandro, CA 94577. He has a Jitterbug flip phone, but he does not use texting or voice mail. His number is: 650-647-4128
- + Mamadou Diallo has asked prayers for his wife Laura Diallo who was hospitalized last week with a pulmonary embolism. Both Laura and Mamadou are members of Church of Our Saviour, Los Angeles.
- + Please keep Louise Reno (Deacon Ron Reno’s wife) in your prayers. She was hospitalized with sepsis and spent three weeks in a rehabilitation home. Deacon Ron, by the way, is not only the glue that holds St. John the Baptist parish in Omaha together (according to Fr. Andrews) he also teaches at the Chesterton Academy where he teaches art and Western Civilization.
- + Father Boyd Britton (Santa Barbara and Los Angeles) reports that he is at home, full of pills, which may have incapacitated him this past week. Some are routine, others are new, aimed at the cancer cells moving from thyroid to lungs.
- + Pray for Father Caleb Roberts and his family as he takes up his new duties as Rector of the Parish of Saint Mark in Portland.
- + As most if not all of our readers know, St. Luke’s in Redding had to be closed. It was a bitter pill! Please pray for the “survivors.” Just say a little prayer for them in your daily intentions.
- + Oh, yes please keep Archbishop Schultz in your prayers and all the clergy (especially in small or struggling parishes) who struggle against the devil and his minions.
- + Pray for the Council of Bishops that they may guide us in unity, peace and concord.
- + Please pray for the repose of the soul of Father Tom Mills, Rector of Saint Andrews Anglican Church in West Point, GA who went to the Lord last May.
- + I used to enjoy the old camping and fishing trips from Glendale-Santa Barbara-Los Angeles. As a result, we were deeply saddened this last Wednesday to learn of the passing of Damion Marshall at the young age of forty-two. His funeral will begin at noon at Church of Our Saviour Los Angeles followed by interment at Forest Lawn, Hollywood Hills, followed by supper back at the Church.