The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter

The Right Reverend D. M. Ashman

November 2026

A Sermon for Trinity XIX

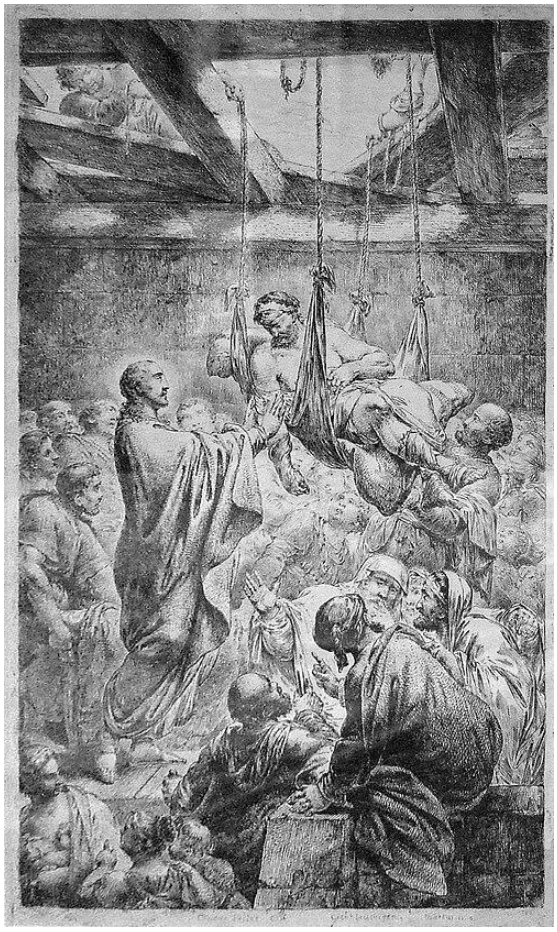
THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY! Talk's cheap. How dare you use this poor person to sell your religion? Who do you think you are? The people who tailed Jesus with notebooks and pens were like modern day journalists who already have their story to cast a harsh light on someone famous, just waiting for one word to give them reason for their hatred and a prize-winning expose. Like Lee Ann Womack in her song, "*I'll think of a reason later*," that says: "*Inside her head may lay all the answers For curing diseases from baldness to cancer Salt of the earth and a real good dancer But I really hate her: I'll think of a reason later*." the eager crowds and a peanut gallery of court reporters. Outside, four men held a co

The religious cranks of His day followed Jesus around with a scowl on their faces, feeling sure that He would slip up and say something or do something to prove Him a false prophet. Just one slip. They looked for three years, and while they got more offended by the hour, they had to watch His miraculous words give life and health to hundreds, winning the hearts of the people by His being honestly and truly good. This day He was under a tile roof in a large building filled to capacity with t carrying their friend badly weakened with palsy, a disease causing paralysis and tremors. They sought Jesus for a healing, but the crowds were too great to pass inside. In a desperate effort, they climbed the roof with the man tied to his bedframe and carefully taking up roof tiles, they opened a hole to lower him down to Jesus. The pens of the hostile scribes started jotting details. Jesus was aware of their presence. He knew what to do. "Friend," He addressed the stranger at His feet. "Be happy today! All your sins are forgiven!" Their eyes met and the uncertainty in the paralytic's face gently melted into sweet relief. All his sins… He had long felt his disease was a judgment from God on his earlier careless life. His condition was probably well deserved. For most people, their natural sympathy was mingled with the suspicion that maybe he deserved God's judgment, and this was it. All my sins, forgiven?

From the crowd a buzz of hostility rose and Jesus knew exactly what was afoot. "What makes you imagine evil?" He asked. "Which one is easier for you to say: Your sins are all forgiven, or say Rise up and walk?" Which is easier to say? In classic Judaism, in the Law of the Torah, only trivial, venial sins could be cleansed and atoned by ritual cleansings and sacrificial systems of offering whole burnt animals. The serious sins that might find you on the floor tied to a cot were worthy only of death. On the desert, execution was about the only remedy for a sin against the Name of Jehovah. It was martial law. Forgiveness was a luxury they could not afford when the survival of all the Jews hung in the balance and God was their only answer. In the first century, under Roman rule, the dynamics were different, but the scribes whispering in the corner had no room for a religion of forgiveness. Who was this man to forgive sins? Forgiveness is God's business.

Jesus' challenge to them of Which was easier to say, then to have it happen, caught them in an unaccustomed spotlight. They had no wish for the sick man to be healed or be forgiven. They wanted a reason to go on hating the Galilean Saviour. To report Him if they could. To all eyes now, nothing was different, no change came to the man still paralyzed on the floor, his friends watching expectantly from the new hole in the roof.

“But that you might know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins…” began Jesus again. This forgiveness was the real healing. He was going to be in heaven someday. His sins were no longer casting a shadow on his heart. He lay there filled with joy, even in his continued palsied state. Jesus spoke again, “Rise up,” He spoke as if the two of them were alone in that shed. “Pick up your bed and take it home.” And it happened. The weakness fled from the man’s body as light poured into his heart and mind. Completely believing the words, he sat up, stood on two steady feet, bent down and lifting the cot like you’d carry a briefcase, he took a loving look at Jesus with grateful eyes and pure love. And he walked obediently out the door.



Nobody in that hall missed the drama of the miracle. Jesus’ words still rang in their minds. That you might know the Son of man has power over sin, to forgive sin… Power on earth. God’s redemptive cause was being expanded. New rules. God is here. Who is this man? The skeptics remained troubled. Their hot story was foiled. They would have to wait another day to trap Him in His words and actions. They had learned nothing from this. *Christ healing the paralytic by Bernhard Rode, 1780*

Some people complain of injustice, evil tidings, inequity, a doctrinal complaint that must be true and therefore proves it’s someone else’s fault. If an answer to their complaint is offered it must be shot down. If a solution is found, it must be discredited. The complaint must remain. It’s the cause that justifies their existence. It joins the atheist to the zealot in a common bond of bitterness. If we can keep talking trash against the ones we envy, we make it true because we are so passionate about it.

It’s true that we are problem-focused creatures. We register threat more readily than relief, and so a negative orientation may creep in. The voicing of contrary judgments wins us approval among the people we want to please. We can blame all our inadequacies on some external group, as in antisemitism, to define ourselves as their victims. It’s easier to be a victim than to apply yourself to your own life and achieve something. One might hate his parents, or those hypocrites in religion, or the rich, or the poor. A complaint has its own life that can define you and keep you down. You may look again and find that there is really no cause for it. Or if there is, the answer is so simple. Just forgive. It’s true. You too have the power on earth to forgive.

She may be an angel who spends all winter Bring the homeless blankets and dinner, A regular Nobel Peace Prize winner, But I really hate her. I’ll think of a reason later… Is that what we want to be known for? A really good sounding complaint? Find a group we can really hate, our antipathy getting us new friends with the same issues? Feeling superior to those – fill in the blankity blank – who we all know are the problem? I don’t think so. Jesus did the hard lifting in this world for everybody. There was no

difference for Him to heal the daughter of a rich and influential Jew, or the servant of a Roman soldier. He knew everyone well and deeply. No one deserved His compassion. He gave it just the same. From His cross He forgave us all. That we may know the Son of man has power on earth to forgive all oursins. Let us rise up now and walk. +PFH

More Pics from The Parish of Christ the King



At Christ the King Parish (*left*) in Washington D.C., Father Carlton Clarke reports that Carlos and Julia gifted new Cathedral Red plush carpet to Christ the King sanctuary and aisle, replacing the 43-year-old carpet.



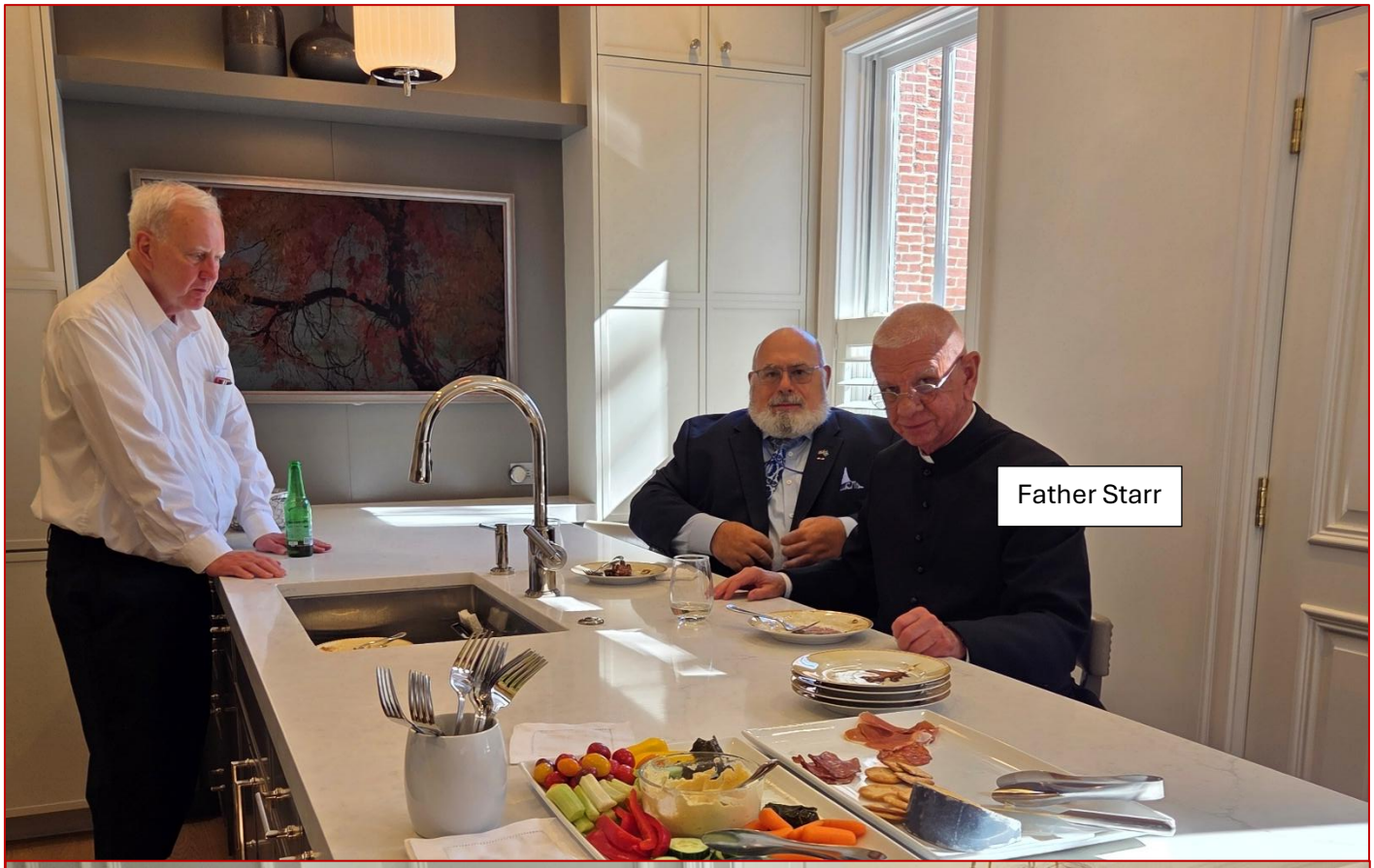
Meanwhile *(at right)* Father Charles Newcomb,

Rector of the Anglican Church of the Holy Cross in Oklahoma City, was the guest celebrant at Saint Patrick's Anglican Church in Westcliffe, Colorado on Saint Luke's Day.

Covering for Father Newcomb was The Rev. Dr. Richard Kishur, Deacon at Saint Albans Anglican Church in Peoria Arizona.

On the Feast of Christ the King, 2026




Father Starr



More News from Father Clarke

Thank you to everyone who attended the Holy Eucharist this morning as we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King. We are especially grateful to those who made the effort to attend despite the many road closures caused by the annual marathon in Washington, D.C.

What a beautiful service and wonderful turnout we had at Christ the King for our patronal feast! We were honored to welcome the Revd. Dr. Albert Starr of the Anglican Province of Christ the King as our guest homilist. Thank you, Dr. Starr, for your thoughtful and insightful sermon. As an Old Testament scholar, we hope that you will join us for one of our Bible studies on a first or third Sunday.

Our sincere thanks also go to our priest associate, the Rev. Dr. Daniel McGrath, for proclaiming the Holy Gospel and assisting with the administration of the Holy Eucharist. We greatly missed having our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Benton Jones, with us because of his recent illness. We continue to pray for his full recovery and look forward to welcoming him on a future occasion.

As we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King, we remembered before Almighty God not only our parish but also the Anglican Province of Christ the King, of which we are a part. We pray for Archbishop Blair Schultz and all the bishops, priests, deacons, and faithful people of the Province. Next Sunday, as we observe All Saints' Day, we will remember the late Archbishop Robert Morse, the founding Bishop of the Province.

It was also a great pleasure to welcome three visitors to Christ the King today: Sally, Rafiel and Ingrid. We pray that they will return and worship with us again. Sally lives only a block away from the church, and we thank our parishioner Bob for inviting her. This is a wonderful example of how each of us can help the Church grow by inviting others to worship.

Immediately after the Mass, we enjoyed the gracious hospitality of Joseph and Mary Walker at their beautiful home next door to the church. What a wonderful fellowship we shared over such delicious food and refreshments! May the Lord continue to bless Joseph and Mary, together with their children, Stone and Lauren. Congratulations once again to our People's Warden, Dr. Cale Wright, and the President of our Women's fellowship, Miss Elian Zarour, who were joined in Holy Matrimony at Christ the King last Friday. We wish them every happiness and blessing as they enjoy their honeymoon and begin their married life together.

For Education and Theological "Amusement"

I was asked if we **had** to observe the Feast of Christ the King. The surprising answer is no we don't. This Feast was inaugurated in 1925 as a feast in the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Pius XI held on the last Sunday in October. With the continuing "liturgical disfunction" of the 1970s, the feast was moved (by some; not us) to the last Sunday after Pentecost or Trinity – and surprisingly many other Christian denominations, like Anglicans and Lutherans. The obvious importance of the Feast of Christ the King is to emphasize the kingship of our Saviour in an increasingly secularized society as seen in the high drama in the Gospel: *Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*. But what was the feast of Christ's kingship before Pius XI? Good question! And the answer is the Feast of the Ascension: *And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy*. Now the amusing part of this article is that I did not have access to a Missal this past Sunday morning. O gosh, what did I, an old Anglo-Catholic, do? Simple! I used the 28 Prayer Book and celebrated the Feast of the Ascension.

A Sermon for The Eve of All Saints' Day

Halloween is rapidly becoming the most popular holiday in America. People groan about the price of gasoline and groceries, but plop down mega dollars for costumes, decorations, candy, parties and revelry of all kinds. And there are a lot of Christians who think that Halloween ought to be ignored and hope it will go away – but of course it won't. Personally, I like giving candy to the "tricker-treaters", and as a Catholic Christian I put Halloween in perspective, when I also celebrate the mostly a forgotten feast and a terribly misunderstood feast, the Feast of All the Saints.

For the ancient Celts, November 1 marked the beginning of a new year. The night before, they celebrated the festival of Samhain, Lord of the Dead. The Celts believed the souls of the dead—including ghosts, goblins and witches—returned to mingle with the living. In order to scare them away, people would wear masks and light bonfires. When the Romans came, they added their own touches, such as making centerpieces out of apples and nuts, honoring Pomona the goddess of Orchards. The Romans also bobbed for apples and drank cider. As Christianity became more and more secure, it became bothersome to Church officials that the old pagan feasts were still observed. So, in 835, Pope Gregory IV moved the celebration for all Christian martyrs from May 13 to November 1st.

Eventually the feast came to honor all Saints, martyred and not. Now the old English (Germanic) word for saint or holy is hallow. (In the Lord's Prayer we say "hallowed be thy Name" which means "holy be thy Name.) So the saints are the hallowed ones and All Saints is All Hallows, so the night before All Saints' Day became known as All Hallows Eve. Eventually the name was slurred to the current Halloween. Secular Halloween, be it innocent fun or tinged with evil, does however, confuse most Christians as to what All Saint's Day means. In the Second Screwtape Letter, C. S. Lewis has Screwtape assert that Church as it is at present is a great ally of the Devil. Then he says, "Don't misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes out boldest tempters uneasy."

My dear friends, it is that vision of the Church that so frightened Screwtape that has been lost for so many in the Christian religion. Halloween is a remembrance of what the Christ came to replace and railing against it is useless. We might as well give up the secular aspects of gift giving at Christmas or coloring eggs at Easter. Rather, what must be done is that we must, as the Church militant here on earth, reeducate ourselves and the world as to what All Saints' Day really means. First and foremost, All Saints' Day is a celebration of the doctrine that the Church consists of the Body of Church, the Blessed company of all faithful people, the visible living and the invisible departed; all are knitted together in a bond of Divine Love. The Lesson for the Epistle and its vision of those made white in the blood of the Lamb show us not a pagan misunderstanding of life after death, but the Christian vision of separation of soul and body and eternal joy and happiness. And the Gospel for All Saints' Day is the Beatitudes. Why? Because they are the manifestation of that Divine Love which we ought to show to each other and to all humans! They are the costume we believers wear to show people who we are – and whose we are!

Many Churchmen separate All Saints' for the living and All Souls' for the dead, but they are really one; because all the saints, in this world and the next, are all part of that same army of Love. And since we believe that death is merely the separation of body and soul, then we pray for them as we hope they pray for us. *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*. *(Revelation 7. 7)*

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New Novel by Christine Sunderland

The Music of the Mountain

Books are burned, truth is denied, and tyranny threatens freedom. Yet Dr. Jane Foster— once a respected professor of Ethics, now exiled for refusing to conform—awakens to a hymn coming from Angel Mountain. The melody is familiar, perhaps from a chapel long ago? Is it memory? Madness? Or a call?

Jane lives alone in Villa Tilifos, Danville, in a grand house whose empty bookshelves mirror the cultural devastation outside. The Social Justice Agency raids homes without warning. Libraries smolder. The great works of Western Civilization—Socrates, Shakespeare, Austen, Tolkien—are condemned as dangerous relics of a forbidden past. Jane has hidden what she can, but she sees the bonfires increasing daily.

Haunted by the child she lost long ago, Jane clings to the ideals her father taught her: goodness, truth, beauty, and the courage to choose the good even when threatened. She summons her former students to join a secret society modeled after the wartime Guernsey Literary Society. Together, they plot to rescue the surviving books and historical documents before they vanish forever.

In Berkeley, near the university, an aging priest hears a medieval hymn echoing through the fog. His hidden basement of sacred texts and his chapel of sacrament and prayer may preserve memory itself. A young journalist writes about the Vienna Holocaust and a high school teacher refuses to lie about the American founding. They soon join Dr. Foster's book club and mission.

As storms batter California and tyranny threatens, Jane confronts her past, finds faith, and decides whether the music of the mountain is a warning… or an invitation. The Music of the Mountain is a literary, inspirational novel about conscience, courage, and our better angels—an ode to freedom and the written word, and those who keep it alive.

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"How do four extraordinary Americans—an elderly Anglican priest, a fired UC Berkeley professor and two former students— stand up against an oppressive book-burning state to save Western Civilization? They are richly described with diverse life experiences. Gripping in places, The Music of the Mountain is a book you will be sorry to leave when finished…compelling and beautifully written."
—MICHELLE EASTON, The Clare Boothe Luce Center

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CHRISTINE SUNDERLAND has served as managing editor for American Church Union Publishing and holds a BA in English Literature from San Francisco State University, emphasis Charles Dickens, Cum Laude. She is the author of seven award-winning novels about faith and family, freedom of speech and religion, and the importance of history and human dignity. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and a cat named Angel. Visit Christine at ChristineSunderland.com.

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Available from IUniverse, Amazon, and your favorite bookstore.

For complimentary review copies please contact Christine at Chris@ChristineSunderland.com.

ACW-DWS Notes, November 2026

November is the time to prepare for Christmas bazaars and other fund raisers. If your ACW is planning sales, don't forget to send in photos for Shepherds Staff! This is a good time to raise money for one of your projects. Keep in mind the 2027 Synod and raise money to pay for your delegate's registration. We are going to try a new way of registering for the next Synod, using the internet, which hopefully will make things much easier. We will be using the old way also, to allow everyone to get used to the new system, and to iron out any problems with it. More details will follow later.

Later this month we will be sending out the ACW Dues notices. Remember that ACW Dues are payable by each parish, whether or not you have an ACW Chapter. Part of the payment goes to Provincial ACW and helps pay for the Opening Reception at Synod. The remainder goes to Diocesan ACW and is used for expenses and donations. We will have donations for two ACW members to cover registration for the Synod.

We will also be sending out forms for requests for Lenten mite boxes. Ash Wednesday is early next year, February 10 th , so we need to get ready. I think that many churches took boxes at this year's Synod, which is a great help, with postage rates going higher and higher! Thank you!



These long winter evenings are a great time to work on handcrafts. Remember the ACW Drawings, and also small items for Synod Welcome Bags. We are fortunate to have such a wealth of talent in our midst. Use your talents and imagination to help us raise money for our various needs. Thank you all for all that you do. You are truly amazing!

Gillian Golden
ACW-DWS President

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.