

# The S. Stephen

## LENT 2015

Vol. 14, No. 3

### *From the Rector*

Dear People of S. Stephen's,

As the Christian season of Lent approaches, I find myself reflecting on its similarities and differences with the seven-day Jewish festival of *Sukkot*. The Orthodox Jewish observance of *Sukkot* is the subject of the wonderful Israeli film *Ushpizin* (2004), well worth watching at any time of the year.

The most obvious parallel between the two observances is that both reference the Hebrews' experience in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. During *Sukkot*, observant Jews dwell in makeshift "booths" or "tabernacles" – temporary dwellings, erected outside their permanent homes. Leviticus 23:42-43 explains the reason: "You shall dwell in booths for seven days ... that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt ...". During the forty days of Lent, similarly, many of the scripture readings and psalms appointed for worship hark back to the Israelites' forty years in the wilderness, recapitulated by the forty days and nights Jesus spent in the wilderness immediately following his baptism.

The differences between the two observances are significant. Lent is forty days; *Sukkot* is seven days. Lent begins in the late winter or early spring; *Sukkot* occurs between September and October. Most tellingly, Lent is a penitential time, a season of fasting and repentance, during which we remember the Hebrews' wilderness experience as a time of temptation and testing – of which the chief lesson is a negative one on what to avoid: "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works" (Psalm 95). By contrast,

*Sukkot* is a time of unrestrained rejoicing and celebration, when observant Jews simplify their lifestyles and dwell outside in temporary huts precisely to remind themselves of God's gracious provision of all the necessities of life: food, drink, clothing, shelter, and the companionship of family and friends.

Despite these signal differences, one great similarity

remains. *Sukkot* and Lent are both times of returning to the roots and getting back to the basics: of remembering where we've come from and who we are. I like to think of Lent in particular as the season when the Church invites us to recommit ourselves to keeping the basic practices of the Christian life, which we should have been keeping all along but in which, alas, we have all too often failed.

The Gospel for Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21) introduces the three chief practices associated with the observance of Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These three disciplines point symbolically to the repair and restoration of our three most basic relationships: with God (prayer); with ourselves (fasting); and with our neighbor (almsgiving). A good way to think of Lent, then, is as an opportunity to attend to these basic relationships.

Elsewhere in this issue of *The S. Stephen*, we are reprinting a "Guide to Making Your Confession" from the website of the Church of the Incarnation, Dallas. Like many such guides, this one includes a checklist for examination of conscience based on the Seven Deadly Sins. Other guides in this genre offer a

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checklist based on the Ten Commandments. But I have found that a simpler and yet more comprehensive form of self-examination and preparation for confession is based on three simple questions: (1) How have I failed to love God? (2) How have I failed to love myself? (3) How have I failed to love the people in my life? (Note the connection here with Our Lord's Summary of the Law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Note also that in the classical Christian understanding, true love of self does not imply selfishness, self-centeredness, or self-indulgence, but rather a proper appreciation, care, and respect for the self as created in God's image and called to eternal life in God's presence.)

The Lenten call to attend to our relationships is a call to take responsibility. Lately, I've been noticing that many of us are very aware of our dissatisfactions with these relationships, but are always inclined to blame something or someone other than ourselves. If our relationship with God isn't all it should be, we blame the Church or the clergy for not providing more inspiring worship or sermons. If we are not getting along with someone, we understand the problem exclusively as the other person's fault. If we are prone to self-destructive behavior of one kind or another, we cast ourselves in the role of victims of pathologies and addictions beyond our control.

The disciplines of Lent, by contrast, invite us to ask not only how we have failed God, our neighbors, and ourselves, but also what concrete steps we can begin to take from now on to repair and restore these broken relationships. Of course, in the very act of taking responsibility we discover that we can't do this alone. We need God's grace and strength, without which we can do nothing, and we need the fellowship and encouragement of all the members of the holy Catholic Church, both in this world and the next.

Lent, like the Jewish *Sukkot*, is a time for returning to our roots and remembering where we've come from and who we are. We shall keep a good Lent if our disciplines help us to repair and restore the three most basic relationships in our lives: with God, with ourselves, and with our neighbors.

This letter comes with all best wishes and prayers for a holy and edifying Lenten season. I remain, faithfully,

Your pastor and priest,

Fr. John D. Alexander

## LENTEN ACTIVITIES AT S. STEPHEN'S

During Lent of 2015, the parish is offering several opportunities to "take something on" in addition to whatever we shall be "giving up."

**Stations of the Cross** – this traditional devotion will be offered on Fridays at 6 pm during Lent except on March 20, when it will be replaced with an hour of Eucharistic Adoration concluding with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. That weekend, on Sunday 22 March at 5:30 pm, we shall be having **Choral Stations of the Cross** with the Schola Cantorum singing the *Stabat Mater* of Orlande de Lassus.

**Lenten Lecture Series** – on the first four Sundays of Lent we offer the series "Science, Religion, and Extraterrestrials" at 6 pm in the Great Hall (following 5:30 pm Evening Prayer in the Lady Chapel). The series features speakers John Hart of Boston University, Kenneth Miller of Brown University, Bishop Nicholas Knisely of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island, and Phoebe Pettingell of St. Stephen's Church. See the series flyer for more details.

**Lenten Quiet Day** – will take place on Saturday 28 February, from 9 am to 2 pm, featuring addresses by the Very Rev. Steven A. Peay, the newly elected Dean and President of Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Wisconsin. The requested donation is \$15 per person. Please RSVP to Cory MacLean, (401) 421-6702, ext. 1, or [office@sstephens.necoxmail.com](mailto:office@sstephens.necoxmail.com) to let us know you plan to attend.

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## FR. SAWICKY'S LETTER

It is one of the curious ironies of our culture that, just as institutions of all sorts (and especially religion) are facing serious decline, so also concepts like tradition, authenticity, and integrity are coming into fashion. One of the chief ways this irony has manifested itself is in the popularity of books on "Benedictine Spirituality." Browse any bookstore's Religion section and you are bound to find books offering insights purportedly from St. Benedict on topics ranging from the environment to corporations to poetry. I am sure a lot can be gained from these books, but to me the wider trend seems to miss out by neglecting the very deep Benedictine influences already present within Christianity, across many different traditions. My own recent retreat at the Benedictine monastery of Christ in the Desert in northern New Mexico was a fresh reminder that few Christian traditions can boast a deeper Benedictine undercurrent than Anglicanism. In this article I will make a few observations on three aspects of our tradition which might be said to bear a Benedictine "stamp," and conclude with a few thoughts on what "Benedictine spirituality" might mean for us today.

The first and clearest is our Prayer Book. The whole thing is ordered towards the sanctification of time and of the whole of our lives. It does this by making some very clear appeals to Benedictine (and even older) monastic tradition. The Psalms and Gospel canticles form the core of the Church's praying life just as they do in Benedict's Rule; following the Prayer Book's schedule will take us through the entire Psalter every month. Scripture is the vocabulary of our worship, with passages scheduled to be read which take us through most of the Bible every two years at Morning & Evening Prayer. Quotes from Scripture are littered throughout the text of the liturgy, and we can find ourselves praying words from the Bible without realizing we're doing it. Just as Benedict's Rule places great emphasis on imbibing the Word of God, so we take the same Word as the language of our corporate worship.

The connection between the Anglican Tradition and Benedictine monasticism is not limited to similarities in worship: many of the great institutions of English Christianity began their lives as Benedictine monasteries, founded long ago even before the great

schism between East and West. Despite the turmoil of the Reformation, we still trace our historical roots in a more or less direct line to the great flowering of monastic Christianity which produced the medieval synthesis of art, science, music, theology, and literature. Behind the walls of monasteries, monks lived stable, self-sufficient lives that provided space for the free exercise of creative and inquiring minds, in addition to providing the occasion for the steady, prayerful sanctification of hearts. This contributed towards the creation of a Christianity which embraced every aspect of life: not just prayer and other holy things, but labor too, and all the mundane habits, responsibilities, and relationships which make up our lives in this world. Monasteries became engines of culture, nodes of economic activity, and drivers of political achievements. The Anglican Tradition retains this same commitment towards a faith that encompasses every part of our lives, and requires that we make choices consistent with that faith in all the contexts in which we find ourselves: not out of a sense of mere duty to religious law, but out of a sense that what we are about as Christians is building up the Kingdom of God, full of grace and truth, beauty and love.

The third aspect of our tradition which bears a Benedictine stamp is our commitment to evangelism. It may sound odd to call monks – who take life vows to a particular community in a particular place – "great evangelists," but nevertheless the name fits. Monasteries were the communities who kept the light of the Gospel burning even during the "Dark Ages" of paganism and tribal violence in much of Europe. Monks traveled to isolated regions to begin new communities, and drew people to themselves by the Christ-like quality of their lives and their commitment to receive every stranger as Christ himself. Great British missionaries like Patrick, Boniface, Cuthbert, and Wilfred secured the gains they had made by establishing monasteries in their wake: monasteries which continued the work of the Gospel in the places they lived, and which have brought the light of Christ to countless



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## THE RECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

*Given at the Annual Meeting on Sunday 25 January 2015*

A year ago, I presided at the 2014 Annual Meeting having just returned from a three-month sabbatical taken to work on my doctoral dissertation. The intervening year has been a momentous one for me personally. On Easter Monday, 2014, I successfully defended my dissertation, and the following month, on May 17, I received my Ph.D. at a ceremony in Marsh Chapel at Boston University.

During the summer, in a completely separate project that had been on hold for some years, I completed the manuscript of a book of homilies for the weekdays of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, which was published by Forward Movement on November 5. We've since been in discussion about similar volumes for Lent and Eastertide, though not this year.

I'm grateful to the Wardens, Vestry, and parishioners of S. Stephen's for their encouragement and support in these projects. For my part, whatever else I've been working on, the parish has always been my first priority, and will continue to be so. And in my remarks this morning I want to offer some reflections on the life of our parish, and also some plans for the way forward.

What we have here at S. Stephen's is really rare and valuable. We should never take it for granted. The more I travel around different parishes in the Episcopal Church, the more I feel grateful and blessed to be associated with the liturgical, musical, and homiletical tradition of S. Stephen's, Providence.

Yet what we do here on Sunday mornings is, in a sense, only the tip of an iceberg. Only about ten percent of an iceberg is ever visible above the water. Yet the visibility of that ten percent depends on the submerged ninety percent that buoys it up and enables it to float – indeed sometimes to tower – above the water's surface.

So much else goes on here through the week that remains largely invisible to those who come only on Sunday mornings: from the Student Group on Sunday evening, to the weekday Offices and Masses in the Lady Chapel, to the Saturday meals of the Epiphany Soup Kitchen, to the monthly meetings of the Catholic Devotional Societies.

The ongoing rhythms of daily life here at S. Stephen's – in the Lady Chapel, the parish office, and the choir room – are like the submerged ninety percent

of the iceberg that undergird and support the visible part of what we do here on Sunday mornings.

And I realize that Sunday morning is just about all that a great many people today can manage, especially young families, given the complexity of their lives and the enormous demands on their time. If you fall into that category, and you come to S. Stephen's only on Sunday mornings, and *that works for you*, fine! I am the last person to criticize or complain. I'm enormously grateful to see you here once a week, taking your rightful part in the Church's worship. What I have to say next does not apply to you.

If, however, you are finding something lacking in your religious and spiritual life, or something missing in your relationship with God, then it may be time to ask whether Church once a week on Sunday mornings is really enough.

In that case, our day-to-day routine at S. Stephen's offers a number of opportunities for deepening and enriching the spiritual lives of our parishioners. The first step is to come and see one of the clergy – Fr. Blake, Deacon Mary Ann, or myself – for spiritual counsel and direction.

When you do that, we'll generally try to help you identify some modest spiritual disciplines or practices you can undertake during the week to sustain your relationship with God in the time between Sunday mornings. I can't say in advance what our recommendations will be. No two individuals are alike, and the spiritual disciplines that suit one person won't necessarily suit another. Competent spiritual directors know that there's no one-size-fits-all pattern. A certain amount of trial-and-error is inevitable.

This past November, I ended my service on the Commission on Ministry in this Diocese, having completed the second of two three-year terms. Serving on the Commission was an illuminating experience. As we interviewed aspirants, postulants, and candidates for Holy Orders, one of our lines of questioning would always involve their spiritual disciplines. Did they go to Church every Sunday? Did they pray the Church's daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer? Did they have a spiritual director, and did they regularly make their Confession? Did they go on an annual retreat? The closer candidates got to ordination, the more insistently we asked these questions, in the expectation that they

urgently needed to be practicing the Church's spiritual disciplines in some form if they were going to be in any position to lead and guide their flocks in the same path.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the same principle holds good for official positions of lay leadership in the Church, particularly in areas that potentially touch on the spiritual formation of parishioners – such as prayer groups, Bible studies, or theological book groups. As rector, I have responsibility for the care of souls in this parish. Before I can delegate any part of that responsibility to other clergy or lay leaders, I need the assurance that they've been adequately formed in the disciplines of the Christian tradition. My ordination vows require no less. And I'm glad to say that in this parish I do have the assistance of some extraordinarily gifted lay leaders who fulfill this criterion admirably.

Over the past six months or so, several people have asked me what happened to the system of three committees instituted with the help of our Parish Development Consultant, Peter Saros. The answer is that while at different times one or another of these committees has been effectively dormant, they've never gone out of existence, and now it's time to revive them.

I'm pleased to announce that Susan Brazil and Nancy Gingrich are continuing as Co-Chairs of the Special Events Committee. Bill Dilworth and Ernie Drew are continuing as the Co-Chairs of a revived and re-envisioned Publicity and Promotions Committee. And Cathy Bledsoe continues as the Chair of a revived Welcomers and Greeters Committee.

Over the coming several weeks, the Staff and Vestry Officers will be meeting with the leaders of each of these three committees to review the events scheduled in our parish calendar for the first half of 2015, and to identify ways in which each committee can make its own unique contribution to the goal of attracting and engaging visitors and newcomers to our parish. So, if you're looking for a way to become involved with our future growth, be in touch with one of the Co-Chairs, and let them know of your interest in their Committee's work.

Last but not least, I want to express my thanks to outgoing Senior Warden Richard Noble, whose support, loyalty, and practical wisdom has been invaluable. During his watch, we made a number of significant steps forward in the life of our parish: from partnering with the Diocese to institute the combined position of Curate and Episcopal Campus Minister, to inviting the Epiphany Soup Kitchen to move its operations to our premises, to undertaking a bold capital fund drive resulting in the renovation of the Great Hall, the Choir

Room, and, this summer, the sanctuary flooring. Richard's leadership helped make all these advances possible, and he deserves our warmest gratitude.

Thank you all for your attention. 2014 was a very good year in the life of S. Stephen's, and I'm confident that with God's grace and help 2015 will be even better.



## FR. SAWICKY'S LETTER

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millions through the ages. The Anglican Communion as we know it today, the third largest body of Christians in the world (after the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox), is the result of centuries of evangelism: in the British Isles, in America, and around the world. We do well to be concerned with the conversion of our souls, with the quality of our prayer, and with the faithful ordering of our common life; but we must also always be concerned with helping to ensure that the "Light to lighten the Gentiles" continues to dawn in every far-flung corner of the earth, beginning wherever we happen to be.

The influence of St. Benedict on the Anglican Tradition is far-ranging, and this article is only the briefest outline. Our prayer, our whole way of being in the world, our commitment to the spread of the Gospel, all bear a distinctly "Benedictine" stamp. If anyone wishes to engage more deeply in "Benedictine Spirituality," you might consider opening the Prayer Book and praying the Daily Office. You might also engage in a deeper examination of your life, and consider how God might be calling you to offer up even the "non-religious" parts to His gracious will. Commit to seeking and serving Christ in all persons, and share His love with all you meet. Most of all, through every moment of every day, resolve to live in the joy of the Lord, offering your life to the Father, and receive eternal life in return.



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## LEADING THE FAITHFUL ASTRAY PART 3: Gnosticism

*By Phoebe Pettingell*

By the end of the first century, Christianity had branched out across the Roman Empire, across the Middle East and into North Africa and Southern Europe, most importantly reaching the capital Rome, itself. As historian and theologian Alister McGrath observes, a kind of reverse colonization was then taking place—as Rome’s official paganism declined into state religion and ancestor worship, a plethora of religions from elsewhere made their way to its center. Among the most popular of this time were “mystery cults,” in which initiates had to be inducted before witnessing the most sacred rituals and partaking of them. Roman legionaries flocked to the worship of Mithra, a sun god originally from Persia, while many Romans practiced the Eleusinian mysteries of the Greeks, symbolically re-enacting the story of Demeter and Persephone. Christianity’s own baptism of catechumens at the Easter Vigil followed this pattern in certain respects. During their period of instruction, the unbaptized were only allowed to stay for the liturgy of the word, and then left before the Eucharistic “mystery” whose meaning was “hidden” from those outside the Church.

In another sense, however, Christianity differed considerably from those faiths, which boasted of secret knowledge available only to the spiritual elite. Anyone who completed catechumenal instruction and was baptized became a full member of the Church. There were no hidden truths remaining to be imparted to a select few. Nevertheless, given the tenor of the times, the tendency for esotericism to creep into Christian doctrine soon arose. Around 136 A. D., Valentinus, a teacher from Alexandria in Egypt, came to Rome. His followers became so numerous he was at one time almost elected pope. Unlike Marcion, he used all or most of the books of the New Testament we know today, along with one Irenaeus of Lyon

called *The Gospel of Valentinus*, and a Coptic fragment from the cache of ancient manuscripts discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt called *The Gospel of Truth*. Valentinus’s disciples claimed that their founder had been trained by Theudas, who, in turn, was a disciple of the Apostle Paul. They held that beyond the Christian story taught in churches there lay a deeper wisdom by which the elect could achieve freedom from the material chains that imprisoned the soul, the true self. This variety of belief is known as Gnosticism.

The name *Gnosticism* comes from the Greek root *gnosis*, “knowledge,” not in the sense of learning but of insight. It seems to have arisen at the beginning of the

second century A. D., influenced by Platonic philosophy, and took many forms, not all of them Christian. The manuscripts discovered at Nag Hammadi include a number of different kinds of Gnostic documents, including the “lost” gospels that sometimes make headlines in newspapers but are nothing much like New Testament material, and largely much later. As with Marcion, Valenti-



nus’s system taught a hierarchy of gods beginning with a primal being, *Bythos*, who ultimately emanated thirty others. The world of matter was brought into existence by the error of Sophia, one of the lower gods, and is ruled over by an evil *demiurge* or still lesser one. However, humanity also partakes of some of the purer nature of Bythos. Thus, it was the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit to free humankind from the bonds of the flesh and return our understanding to the world of ideal forms—the *pleroma* [a term from Plato]. As already noted with Marcion, for most cultures of the time, polytheism seemed more natural than monotheism, and the goal of salvation was to escape from the bonds of materiality into a realm of pure spirit.

Valentinian gnosticism proved the most insidious of the early heresies, promising its followers esoteric learning unavailable to carnal minds. Through its mat-



ter/spirit dualism, it seemed to provide an answer to the ever-present question: how can a beneficent God allow terrible things to happen in this world? Until some time in the fourth century it was enough of a threat to challenge the defenders of orthodoxy, including Justin Martyr (100-165), Irenaeus of Lyon (130-202), and Tertullian (160-220) to write whole books attacking its doctrines. Irenaeus in particular became the champion of the orthodox argument that the created world is, in itself, good and created by a loving God; that to fulfill the divine purpose, humankind had to be created with free will; that our sin is the disorder that keeps us from being in harmony with God and nature and brought death into the world; but that Christ's death and resurrection conquered sin and death and, at his second coming, creation will be restored in its fullness, not as some kind of immaterial spiritual realm, but as the "New Jerusalem, the "Supper of the Lamb."

Valentinian gnosticism seems to have lost its appeal sometime toward the end of the fourth century. However, gnostic dualism continued in various movements, first in the Byzantine Empire, then gradually spreading west. Around the eleventh century, a sect arose in Medieval Europe known as the Cathars, or Pure Ones. They believed matter was evil and Satan was the Demiurge who ruled the created world. God was pure spirit, and Jesus was an angel who had only appeared to become incarnate. Thus, all descriptions of him in the New Testament were to be understood allegorically. Sexual abstinence was encouraged, even in marriage. Civil authority was to be resisted since it came from Satan, and the Church hierarchy was evil. Cathars allied themselves with the working classes and the poor and occupied themselves in good works. They claimed to give women a status equal to men—although this seems to have meant that they could eventually become males spiritually, a somewhat dubious consolation.

The Cathars rejected the Church's sacraments, but had one of their own: the *consolamentum*—or "consolation" which rendered the recipient "perfect." Thus, it was usually administered shortly before death. They were first condemned by the Church in 1022, and with greater and greater vehemence as their power grew in the Languedoc area of France where they eventually became known as Albigensians after the town of Albi, which was one of their strongholds. In 1209, after they murdered a papal legate, Pope Innocent III declared a crusade against them that lasted twenty years. Unlike the second century church, where Christians had no political power and struggled for survival in a pluralistic society, the medieval Church was the entity against which groups like the Cathars rebelled, with the help of certain



*Valentinus*  
(c. 100 – c. 160)

local noblemen and princes. Descriptions of the Albigensian Crusade tend to be shaped by the perspective of the historian, since it had not only religious but political dimensions, and implications for the rise of nation states. The Inquisition was a product of its aftermath, so Catholic and Protestant histories tend to divide sharply on their conclusions about this, while both are revolted by some of the tortures and punishments used against the Cathars. Yet at the same time, men like Saint Dominic sought to win them back to the Catholic faith by preaching and by the example of a holy life—modeled in general by the order he founded to combat the corruption in the Church criticized by the Albigensians.

In 1934, ten years after the discovery at Nag Hammadi, the German scholar, Walter Bauer advanced the argument in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity* that from the beginning there was not one Christianity but a plurality of "christianities" of which the gnostic varieties were just as early and "original" as their "orthodox" counterpart – and that "Orthodox Christianity" gained the upper hand – and became "orthodoxy" – precisely as the centralized hierarchy represented by the likes of Irenaeus consolidated its power in the Church. Since Bauer, a number of writers, both scholarly and popular, have perpetuated this line of thinking, while periodically news stories announce the "discovery" (really the translation) of "lost" gospels that purportedly change our

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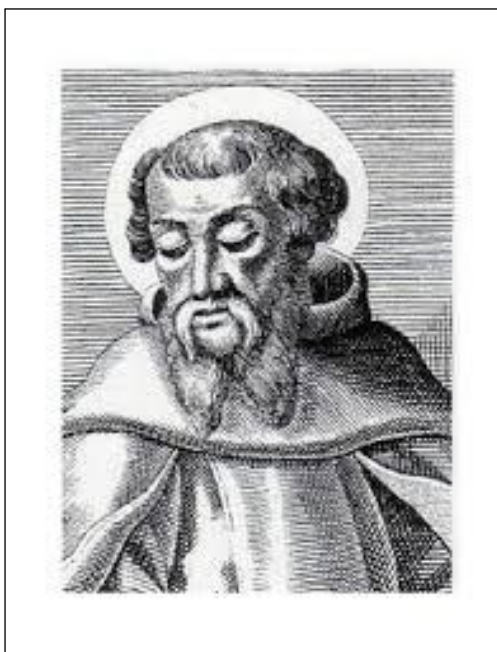
understanding of Jesus. The notion of suppressed books of the New Testament canon might seem more plausible if the Church of the first and second centuries had the temporal power of the medieval ecclesiastical body that battled Catharism. But in fact it had none. The early Church did not persecute, and did not have armies, but lived in a pluralist culture, where it was often persecuted itself, and where it advanced by its faith and example. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus argues that the real strength of Christianity is this: 1) the Catholic faith has remained the same over time, evolving but not changing, in contrast to the ever-morphing mythologies and belief-systems of the gnostics; 2) the Catholic faith remains one in all places, as opposed to the never-ending regional variations of gnostic teachings; 3) the Catholic faith has been passed down *publically* by bishop to bishop from the apostles, as opposed to the notion of a body of hidden teaching handed down from Jesus secretly to some but not others; 4) the Catholic faith is based on the eyewitness accounts of the apostles preserved in (what would later become) the canonical New Testament texts, as opposed to the false gospels and epistles of gnostic writers which were written later.

Gnosticism's next major revival began at the periphery of religion, claiming to explore early scientific ideas. The sixteenth and seventeenth century fascination with Rosicrucianism, alchemy, the Philosopher's Stone, and various other "secret" and mystical formulae and rituals fostered various occult practices, often claiming to derive from the Cathars. By the eighteenth century, much of this had become enshrined in Masonry, where it gradually lost spiritual or magical significance. Then, toward the end of the nineteenth century a revived fascination with paganism and ancient cultic religions sparked interest in gnostic dualism once again, resulting in the formation of esoteric societies whose activities ranged from Spiritualistic attempts to contact the dead to Black Masses. Christian Science shows certain gnostic tendencies. The current "New Age" has also spawned some gnostic rebirths, including the fascination with a Hollywood version of Kabbalah, and, most probably, Scientology.

Those who despair too much of the times, or of human behavior, feeling this era to be worse than any other, often open themselves up to gnostic dualism's insidious promise of escape from the wickedness of our carnal nature, and superiority over the common herd.

Gnosticism can always be recognized by the spiritual elitism of its claim to esoteric understanding hidden from the ordinary believer, and from its rejection of material creation in favor of pure spirit. It is anti-Incarnational. Any form of Christianity that sees Satan as having jurisdiction over the material world raises the specter of gnosticism. Irenaeus observed that heretics use Scripture as a peg on which to hang their own beliefs. But "everyone who wishes to know the truth should consider the apostolic tradition, which has been made known in every church in the entire world.... The apostles have, as it were, deposited this truth in all its fullness in [the church], so that whoever wants to may draw from the water of life." This is not an appeal to power—as we have seen, the ecclesiastical bodies of the second century had no temporal jurisdiction—but a promise that salvation

is available to all the faithful not through esoteric knowledge, but in the Church's Word and Sacraments and "what has at all times and in every place been believed." Irenaeus concludes: "This is the gate of life; all others are thieves and robbers."



*Saint Irenaeus 130 - 202*  
*Bishop of Lyons*



## Society of Mary

**Join us for the Holy Rosary,  
breakfast and an informal  
meeting at 10 am on the fol-  
lowing Saturdays:**

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## A GUIDE TO MAKING YOUR CONFESSION

*(Note: This guide was adapted by the Rev. Matthew Olver from St. Augustine's Prayerbook, and is reprinted with permission from the website of the Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas. – Eds.)*

### EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

At a time and place convenient for you, when you can be alone, and with pen and paper at hand, examine your conscience in the light of God's love and of your own state in life.

Begin by reminding yourself that sin is not so much the breaking of a law as a refusal to love. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Then, ask the Holy Spirit's guidance and blessing. Perhaps you will want to use this collect:

*Come. O Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind and inflame my heart, that I may worthily confess all my sins and, being truly penitent, may both amend my life and serve thee faithfully; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Then review your life since the time of your last confession. Look at your relationship with God and others in the places where you live your life; look at how you have conducted yourself in these places; look at how you have treated yourself and others; reflect on thoughts you can remember having and what you did with these thoughts: did you keep returning to sinful ones; did you express these in word or deed?

Write down on your paper all the sins against God, neighbor and self which you can **remember**. The word "remember" is very important. In making your confession, you do NOT confess anything you think you may have committed, or of which you have no *specific* memory.

You may confess only those wrongs which you have a *specific* memory of having done or those good things which you specifically remember having had the opportunity to do, but which you refused to do.

A confession must be **specific**. No broad, general statements, like "I have fallen into pride"...

but, "I have fallen into the sin of pride in these specific ways: I tried to force my spouse to submit to my will one time by silent treatment for a period of several hours; another time by verbal abuse. Twice, I bragged about my academic honors in order to impress others. Once I held myself aloof from others because I felt I was not as "cultured" as they and did not wish to risk being "put down" by them." Specificity includes declaring how often you think you have fallen into some particular sin, the circumstances of it, and what you think your motivation was.

Once you have written down any sins which first come to mind, then, and only then, use some such aid to examination, such as the following "sin list," to act as a sieve for your memory. Read through the list, asking yourself its questions, and writing down the specific ways in which you have fallen into any on the list:

**PRIDE** *is at the root of all sins; it is putting oneself rather than God at the center of our lives and trying to make God and others put us at their center.*

Have I intentionally failed to

- Worship God every Sunday and holy day of obligation in his Church?
- Trust God in day-to-day life?
- Accept my work as part of my vocation from God and to seek to glorify him by my exercise of it?
- Make time in my life for personal attentiveness to God (a discipline of prayer) and for my own spiritual growth (e.g. through a discipline of study)?
- Refrain from abusing God's holy Name?

Have I been caught up in getting more and more of anything for myself instead of giving from what God has given me of time, talent, and treasure to his glory and for the good of others? Have I been vain, arrogant, snobbish? Or have I demeaned myself in any way, considering myself of much less worth or value than others? Have I lied for any reason?

Do I admit my own need for help and ask for it? Do I accept myself, despite my limitations and my weaknesses?

**ENVY** *results from fear of not having or losing something I want for myself and is expressed in dissatisfaction with my own life and begrudging others their gifts and good fortune.*

*Continued next page*

*Continued from previous page*

Have I been annoyed when other people were praised?  
Have I taken pleasure in the misfortune of others?  
Have I been malicious or contemptuous...shown prejudice in any respect?

**ANGER** *blinds my judgment and tries to eliminate any obstacle to making myself the center of all life.*

Have I tried to create a pleasant, constructive environment in all the places and among all the people I live my life? Have I been thoughtless and cruel towards others? Have I tried to foster and maintain friendships and given genuine respect and support to their people? Have I been fair and honest in my relationships? Have I respected the rights and sensitivities of others? Do I tend to categorize people unfairly or ignore them because they are different?

Have I been angry at the faults of others...of myself? Have I given into resentment...been cynical? Attacked another in thought, word or deed? Have I refused to forgive others, sought to make them "pay" for what I think they "did" to me? Have I been hostile, nagging, rude, pouting? Refused to pray for or do good to those I feel are my "enemies?"

**SLOTH** *is not merely laziness; it includes indifference and extends to the refusal of joy by making no attempts to combat boredom.*

Have I neglected my spiritual life because it seemed so "dry?" Have I procrastinated, wasted time, or failed to do my best?

Have I ignored those who are needy, unpopular, or difficult to get along with? Have I spent too much time on TV or other forms of self-entertainment? Have I neglected the duties which a constructive and responsible person should render to my home, my parish, my community and society? Am I trying to improve the quality of life around me, or do I foul up the environment and waste the good things I have? Am I working at becoming a better person and better Christian? Am I making the most of my talents, my education and my opportunities?

**AVARICE** (or *Covetousness*) *is the inordinate love of material things and the status, power, or sense of security they bring.* Have I made "the good life" or "a higher standard of living" into my god? Have I been domineering, patronizing, extravagant, stingy? Have I stolen, cheated, given bribes? Am I a good steward of my time, talent and treasure, obedient to what God expects of me in each of these areas of his gifts to me?

**GLUTTONY** *is an undue attention to physical pleasure or comfort; it includes being fussy or fastidious, as well as a lack of discipline.*

Have I over-indulged in food or drink? Have I refused to discipline my body by fasting or practicing abstinence? Have I neglected my health? Have I failed to get enough rest, exercise, recreation? Have I condemned various pleasures in life as evil in themselves? Have I been fussy about my person or any matter?

**LUST** *is misuse of our gift of sexuality for selfish ends and in violation of how God intends us to use it in accordance with our state of life (married or single).*

Am I grateful for having been created by God a sexual creature, a creature with a body who relates to him and others through my body? Am I desirous of growing in sexual maturity and responsibility so that I use my body in a way which is pleasing to God and do not misuse my sexual powers in selfish or exploitative ways?

Have I been unfaithful in any way to my spouse? Have I engaged in sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage? Have I lured others into sexual sins? Have I been immodest? Have I been prudish? Have I condemned or repressed the legitimate use of my being a sexual creature, whether in marriage, or in the expression of friendship or affection by such as a chaste hug or kiss or touch? Have I been deliberately cruel to persons or to animals?





## MAKING YOUR CONFESSION

Find out from the priest to whom you will make your confession how the Sacrament of Reconciliation is administered by him: at the altar rail, in a confessional booth, in his study?

When you get to the place where you will make your confession, review your list and then make an act of contrition, perhaps using the following prayer:

*O my God, I believe in thee, I hope in thee, and I love thee. I grieve that I have so often offended thee by my sins, and I resolve henceforth by thy grace and mercy to lead a better life.*

If you have to wait for others who are ahead of you, you may find it helpful to pray the Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143).

After you have made your confession, listen carefully to any advice which the priest gives you. Before pronouncing Absolution, he may give you a Penance, something to say or to do by which you express your thanks to God and his Church for their forgiveness of you. Penance should be done either before leaving the place of confession or before your day comes to an end. If you do not understand what you are supposed to say or do, tell the priest and he will explain it more carefully. Whether the priest gives you a penance or not, do remember soon after your confession to thank God and his Church for their forgiveness and to ask God for his help in resisting temptation:

*O most merciful god, accept my unworthy thanks for thy great mercy in washing away all my sins. May the grace of this Absolution strengthen and sustain me, and may thy great mercy defend me from all the assaults and temptations of Satan in the days ahead. Amen.*

*Continued on page fifteen*

## LENTEN READING

*By William Dilworth*

Reading appears to be one of those Lenten practices we Anglicans owe to the Benedictines, along with taking on individual acts of self-denial, such as giving up chocolate or alcohol. In Chapter 48 of his *Rule*, St. Benedict writes:

On the days of Lent,  
from morning until the end of the third hour  
let [the monks] apply themselves to their reading,  
and from then until the end of the tenth hour  
let them do the work assigned them.  
And in these days of Lent  
they shall each receive a book from the library,  
which they shall read straight through from the beginning.  
These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.

Prudently, St. Benedict goes on to stipulate that a couple of experienced monks should patrol the monastery during the times set aside for reading to make sure that everyone really *is* reading, and not lounging about or gossiping! In the next chapter he urges monks to observe Lent through personal asceticism:

From his body, that is  
he may withhold some food, drink, sleep, talking and jesting;  
and with the joy of spiritual desire  
he may look forward to holy Easter.

The difference between the Benedictines and twenty-first century American Christians is that the monk guided by the Rule already spends considerable time in reading (or being read to) and in performing ascetic acts outside of Lent, and most of the rest of us do not. St. Benedict referred to these additional practices as increasing “the usual burden of our service,” but for non-monks these seasonal practices might be the bulk of our usual service. Taking this to heart, we should at least be grateful for the opportunity during Lent and other penitential seasons to take on some of the disciplines that monks practice throughout the year but that we might otherwise neglect completely. And the Good News for us, is that after Lent is over, we might just find that gradually they become more and more part of our daily lives.





## TREASURER'S CORNER

*By Ransom Widmer*

In my discussions with fellow parishioners following the Annual Meeting, it became clear that the Capital Campaign is not fully understood. This article is intended to make its operation clearer.

In 2011, our parish retained Peter Saros, Parish Development & Stewardship Consultant to work with the clergy, lay leadership, and parishioners to draft a Parish Development Plan. After a series of dinners and other meetings, a Parish Development Plan was adopted by the Vestry in 2012. This was our guide for growing a larger membership and strengthening our financial condition.

One aspect of the plan's implementation involved large capital expenditures, namely: Renovating the Great Hall, Repairing the Sanctuary floor and Restoring the North Aisle Stained Windows. To aid in financing these projects, the Capital Campaign was introduced to the parish at a dinner in 2012.

Parishioners were asked to pledge to the Campaign over the three years 2013, 2014, 2015. The amount pledged could be paid as convenient: lump sum, annually, quarterly, or monthly. By late 2012, we had received 40 pledges yielding \$115,515. As of December 31, 2014, the following Capital Campaign contributions have been received: 2012 \$16,825, 2013 \$41,615, 2014 \$18,640 for a total of \$77,080 which leaves \$38,435 to be collected in 2015 which is 1/3 the total pledged.

After the Vestry reviewed the results of the Capital Campaign, it decided to proceed immediately with the remodeling of the Great Hall. The Vestry felt confident with this decision for two reasons: the total Capital Campaign pledges exceeded our contractors' estimated costs and our Parish Development Plan called for the Great Hall's remodeling as a tool for expanding membership and strengthening our finances. Therefore, construction would go ahead financed by Capital Campaign contributions received, and supple-

mented by funds from our Endowment. The Endowment will be repaid as Capital Campaign contributions are received. The restoration was completed just prior the beginning of the 2013-2014 program year at a cost of \$99,485. Any Capital Campaign Contributions collected above this amount will be applied to the refurbishment of the North Aisle Stained Glass Windows.

During 2013 a non-Capital-Campaign project, the remodeling of the Choir Room, was completed and fully financed by contributions from anonymous donors in the parish. This included painting, refinishing the floors and rewiring the electrical system.

This coming summer, another Capital Campaign project will be completed: the repair of the Sanctuary floor. Again, anonymous parishioner donors will completely finance this project and a contractor has been engaged to begin work after the choir season.

This leaves the restoration of the North Aisle Windows, the last and most expensive Capital Campaign project. Julie J. Sloan LLC has been selected as our consultant and has completed a preliminary study of our stained glass windows. However, we do not have the funds to move forward with this project – the funds available from the Capital Campaign are not nearly sufficient. Therefore, the Vestry is working with a select committee to identify persons and corporations with an interest in making significant contributions for the restoration of historic churches and their stained glass windows. Once we have received pledges of sufficient funds, we will authorize Julie Sloan to prepare bids to engage contractors. We expect the refurbishment to take several years.

I hope this has helped you better understand our Capital Campaign. Should you have any questions or comments, please telephone me at 401 952-0853 or email me at [treasurer@sstephens.necoxmail.com](mailto:treasurer@sstephens.necoxmail.com).

See you in church!

### NEW LINENS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF SHIRLEY COOK

In 2014, longtime member and past president of the Altar Guild Shirley Cook entered her Eternal Life in Christ. The Altar Guild has dedicated new small linens for the daily Masses in the Lady Chapel in her memory who served the work of the altar so faithfully in this life. The worship at S. Stephen's is made possible by the dedicated ministry of the Altar Guild whose efforts, though unseen by the congregation, are vital.

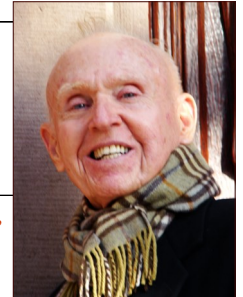




# Quodlibet

by James Busby

**quodlibet** (kwäd'lä bet') *n* [ME fr. ML quodlibetum, fr. L quodlibet, fr. *qui* who, what + *libet* it pleases, fr. *libere* to please] 1. a piece of music combining several different melodies, usually popular tunes, in counterpoint and often a light-hearted, humorous manner - *Merriam Webster*



A few thoughts about forthcoming events seem highly appropriate. I hope you make note of them now in your diaries as they'll be upon us before you know it, along with some crocuses, I hope ... This winter all but seemed to be teasing us with no atmospheric inconvenience.

By the time you read this we will have sung Steven Serpa's new *Missa Brevis* "Eya, martyr Stephane" but I wished to chronicle it, nonetheless. We sang this new setting of the Ordinary of the Mass on the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany (8 February), composed for us by long-time Schola member Steven Serpa. Steven began singing with us during his undergraduate years at the University of Rhode Island. After Masters Degrees in both Early Music and Composition, he is currently in the doctoral program at the University of Texas at Austin. The Mass setting is dedicated "to James Busby, the Schola Cantorum of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Providence, Rhode Island, and to the Rev'd John D. Alexander, Rector." It is based on the fifteenth century medieval carol *Eya, martyr Stephane*, found in *Musica Britannica*. The melody of the refrain is parodied, or quoted, throughout the entire Mass. The text of the refrain is "*Eya, martyr Stephane, pray for us we pray to thee*," as a petition to our patron Saint. Steven's Mass is typically well crafted and he continues to grow in musical grace. He knows altogether too well what we like and what we do best including in his words "extremely crunchy English sounding cross relations!" The six-voice *Agnus Dei* in canon is a wonderful addition to twenty-first century polyphony. Both the Rector and I are touched by his dedication and continued friendship. Cory MacLean has been accepted in the group Viriditas led by the redoubtable Cristi Catt and I've asked her to write a little on this.

*"I am honored to have been invited to join Viriditas, the Night Song Women's Schola under the direction of Cristi Catt. In addition to a Night Song performance on March 22nd at First Church in Cambridge, Viriditas will join Tapestry for a concert at the Church of the Advent in Boston entitled Anima: visions of Hildegard's Ordo Virtutum on June 10th at 12:30 pm, performing selections from The*

*Nine Orders of the Angels and other works by composer Patricia Van Ness."*

Thank you, Cory! On that topic, I regularly conduct the gender specific fifteen voice men's schola for Night Song, *Beneficia Lucis* and we'll be performing a concert of Plainchant and Don Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613) and three Gesualdo motets completed by Igor Stravinsky at the same venue commencing at 2 pm. Both concerts are under the umbrella of the bi-annual Boston Early Music Festival. Gesualdo, one of the bad-boys of the musical Renaissance is described as "Prince of Venosa, Count of Conza, composer, lutenist and murderer (!)." His pastimes of nobility and perpetrator are equaled by some of the most interesting and innovative music of this era - enough to engage the arguably most creative musical mind of the twentieth century to complete the fragments left of the three large motets. Both concerts are open to the public with a free-will offering received. I'd so love to see some familiar faces there.

On Sunday 22nd March at 5:30, here at S. Stephen's, the Schola Cantorum will join in The Stations of the Cross. The music featured will be *Stabat Mater* for eight voices of Orlande de Lassus (1532 - 1594). More details of this service and the wonderful work for two choirs will follow, but be apprised of that date and hold it please, as it is such a meaningful devotion to make.

For now, I leave you with this photo of a somewhat peckish looking polar bear. Take that as you will and see you in church. - JCB



## TEMPTED AS WE ARE: CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

By Robert Armidon

The late Austin Farrer (1904-1968) was described by Richard Harries, former Bishop of Oxford, as “the greatest mind produced by the Church of England” in the twentieth century. Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey evidently agreed, as he chose Farrer’s book *The Triple Victory: Christ’s Temptation According to St. Matthew* [Cowley Press, 1990 reprint. Available on Amazon] as his 1965 Lent Book selection, and even wrote a brief foreword for the book. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of its publication; its themes are particularly germane to the approaching season of Lent.

As the book’s title indicates, its subject is the three temptations of Jesus Christ in the wilderness in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Interestingly, Farrer begins by examining these temptations in the light of the baptism of Jesus in the third chapter of Matthew, considering them to be one story, rather than two distinct ones. Farrer says, “The Baptism, too, is a temptation story, with the Baptist, however innocently, cast for the tempter’s role.” He compares John’s incredulity at Jesus’ request to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-14) with Peter’s rebuke of Jesus when he tells his disciples that he will suffer and be killed before being raised on the third day (16:21-22). While John “deserves no rebuke for expressing his own humility ... in so doing he offers a temptation to pride on the part of Christ.” Here, too, as with the later three temptations, Jesus must show obedience to the will of his Father and not be swept away by concerns of station.

Farrer gives a typological answer to the question of why Jesus was tempted in the manner depicted in Matthew: “The situation of Israel in the wilderness is evidently understood by St. Matthew to be in

Christ’s mind, and he no less evidently intends it to be in the minds of his readers.” Christ is the true Israel, who faces in his person, and overcomes, the same temptations that the nation of Israel endured in the wilderness. The first temptation of Christ—that of hunger, and Satan tempting him to turn stones into loaves of bread—corresponds to Israel’s grumbling about the lack of food and water in the wilderness. Jesus, in his rebuffing of Satan, quotes Deuteronomy: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (4:4). As the Israelites were to trust in the Lord, so must the Son of God.

At this point Farrer poses two fascinating questions: “First, if Jesus could have stepped out of the Father’s divine will by falling to temptation, would his act have carried the divine power with it? Second, supposing ... that it had been right for Jesus to bid the stones be bread, and he had done so, would the effect have followed—*could* it have followed?” He quickly dismisses the first question: “The divine nature does not sin. If Jesus had fallen to temptation it would have shown that our faith is false: he was not the Son of God.” As for the second,

Farrer comments: “Jesus does not ask what he could do, he asks what he should ... The word of power must be a word which, relayed through the lips of the Son, issued out of the Father’s heart, in furtherance of his saving will.”

In discussing the second temptation, Farrer points out that the first two sins of Israel in the wilderness were virtually the same sin, that of “murmuring” for bread and water. However, “the issue of ‘tempting God,’ hidden in the first, comes into the open with the second.” Like as Israel “put the Lord to the proof” by demanding water at Rephidim (Exodus 17), so Satan dares Jesus to prove himself the Son of God by throwing himself from the roof of the Temple, in order that







*Austin Farrer*  
1904—1968

angels might rescue him. Jesus resists this second temptation, and again quotes Deuteronomy: “It is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’” (Matthew 4:7). Farrer elaborates: “Jesus’s answer is to place himself firmly under the Law of Religion. To be the Son of God is to be perfect in obedience. Trust, not test, is the rule of faith ... Christ takes to himself what was said to Israel.”

The third temptation, in which Satan takes Jesus to a “very high mountain” and promises him “all the kingdoms of the world” if he will fall down and worship him (4:8)—corresponds to the third temptation of Israel, that of idolatry. When Moses had vanished into the mountains for his fast of forty days and forty nights—a fast which Jesus likewise undergoes in Matthew—the people of Israel became impatient and fell to worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32), which, according to Farrer, “embodies the false promise of a short-cut to the possession of kingdoms; of kingdoms seen from the mountain-top afar, and withheld by God from his children behind the barrier of death.” Jesus rejects this third temptation, yet again quoting Deuteronomy: “Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (4:10).

Farrer speaks of “a climax of evil” in the three temptations—using the word “climax” in its ancient sense, that of “steps up and up,” or a ladder ascending. “In the first (temptation) Christ is on the ground. In the second he is on the roof of the Temple. In the third he is on the roof of the world.” The force of the temptations increases commensurately; in the first, Satan tempts Jesus to act himself, in changing stone to bread; in the second, he tempts Jesus to tempt his heavenly Father; and, finally, having exhausted the temptations in the Father-Son relationship, Satan must “come forward with an offer of his own” and attempt to supplant the Father altogether. Jesus, although tempted, rejects these terms. Farrer remarks, “We cannot serve two masters—not Satan and the Father of Jesus, not the God of Israel and the golden calf.”

Who better than Archbishop Michael Ramsey, in the book’s foreword, to have the final word? “It is a book which helps us to read the Bible with new percep-

tion and to find our Lord brought near to us with new vividness. We are shown ... what it means that Jesus is the Son of God, and at the same time how near is his supreme conflict to our little conflicts.” Surely, in this season of Lent, we can take some comfort from this nearness, and pray that he will help us to emerge victorious in our own battles with temptation.



*Continued from page eleven*

## A FORM OF CONFESSION

(see *The Book of Common Prayer* [1979] pp 447-452)

*The Penitent begins*

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

*The Priest blesses the Penitent, after which the Penitent says*

I confess to Almighty God, to his Church, and to you, Father, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed, in things done and left undone. My last confession was

\_\_\_\_\_ ; since then, I have committed the following sins: \_\_\_\_\_. For these and all

other sins which I cannot now remember, I am truly sorry. I pray God to have mercy on me. I firmly intend amendment of life, and I humbly beg forgiveness of God and his Church, and ask you, Father, for counsel, direction, and absolution.

*Here the Priest may offer counsel, direction, and comfort.*

*The Priest then pronounces Absolution, after which he says*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you all your offenses; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Priest* The Lord has put away all your sins.

*Penitent* Thanks be to God.

*The Priest concludes*

Go (or abide) in peace, and pray for me, a sinner.



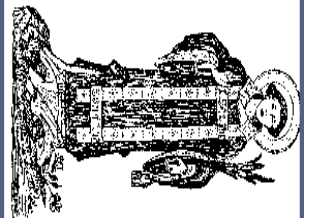


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Lenten Veil 1475-1480, Sachse, Germany. Artist unknown.



# The S. Stephen

LENT 2015