



The S. Stephen

LENT 2018

Vol. 17, No. 3



Jesus Chasing the Merchants from the Temple
by *Quentin Matsys* (1456/1466–1530)

My Dear People,

Letter From the Rector

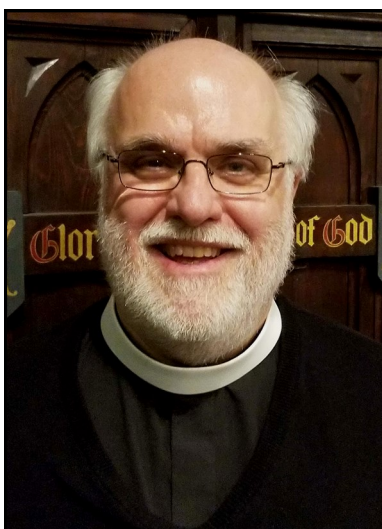
Once more the season of Lent approaches. Already a number of online wags are pointing out that this year Ash Wednesday falls on Saint Valentine's Day, and Easter on April Fools' Day. One advantage of these concurrences, I suppose, is that they make the respective dates easy to remember.

Over the years, I've come to see Lent more and more as a time of "getting back to basics". At S. Stephen's the liturgy is simplified; polyphony gives way to plainchant. As we do in alternating years, this Lent we shall be using the "Sarum" Lenten Array vestments: simple unbleached linen with oxblood orphreys.

Getting back to basics. To begin the season, the Liturgy of Ash Wednesday enumerates these basics of Christian spiritual practice as three: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Prayer. If we have grown lax in our prayer lives, as most of us do from time to time, Lent affords the opportunity for a spiritual kick start. We do well to take on some extra disciplines of prayer, both corporate and personal, during this season. Come regularly to one or more of our weekday Offices or Masses. Or try reading Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer each day. (See the article in this issue by Bill Dilworth on online versions of the Daily Office.) Come to Friday Stations of the Cross. Or spend some time in lectio divina, or quiet meditation with an icon. The possibilities are endless. The main thing is to commit oneself to something extra during Lent, and then do it, whether one feels like it or not.

Fasting. Lent is not only about "taking something on," but also "giving something up." Traditionally, we abstain from meat on Fridays, to remind ourselves that Jesus died on a Friday. Ideally, whatever we give up for Lent will be not too easy and not too hard: something that we will miss enough to make it a real sacrifice, but not so much that we will inevitably give in to temptation. (What we give up will also change as the years go by. When I was younger, I routinely gave up alcohol and dessert during Lent; however, now that I seldom indulge in either, what



with diets and such, I have to find something else. Coffee? Tea? Oh dear. But maybe. We'll see.)

Almsgiving. Gifts to the poor and needy—and, more generally, acts of kindness and compassion to those who need our help in any way—are integral components of Christian spiritual practice. We encounter Christ in the faces of "the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 25:40). Ideally, what we give up in the "fasting" category frees up some of our resources to give away. Moreover, the best almsgiving is personal. Anonymous donations to a worthy charity over the internet are fine and laudable, but

not nearly as spiritually transformative as actual face-to-face interaction with those whom we seek to serve. Again, the possibilities are endless.

The Church commends the practice of making a Lenten "Rule" addressing these elements of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This word comes from the Latin *regula*, which means a measuring stick (as in a ruler). It gives us a target to aim for, and a standard by which to measure our progress. And it just happens that this year's Lenten study series, on Sunday evenings, comprises a video series from the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) on "Rule of Life." Please plan on joining us as we explore this ancient and foundational component of classical Christian spirituality. It should be fun as well as informative (and maybe even formational).

Finally, as I point out in the Rector's Annual Meeting Address printed elsewhere in this issue of The S. Stephen, everything we do together in church has, or should have, the goal of helping us hear and respond to God's call to grow in the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord. He is the End, everything else is the means. Nowhere is this truer than of our Lenten disciplines. It is a joyful thing to get back to basics.

With all best wishes and prayers for a Holy Lent, I remain, faithfully,

Your pastor and priest,

Fr. John D. Alexander

SURPRISING CONVERSIONS: WRITERS WHO EMBRACED ORTHODOXY IN A SECULAR AGE

Part 3: W. H. Auden

by Phoebe Pettingell

Not all literary conversions of the era leading up to and during World War II were motivated by social conservatism. If T. S. Eliot became the leading voice of Modernist poetry, W. H. Auden (1907-1973) was for many years its *enfant terrible*. The

son of a doctor and grandson of two Anglo-Catholic clergymen, his brilliant satiric style made him stand out as a student at Oxford. His first book of poems in 1928 was privately published, but already launched him as an exciting new writer, soon imitated by others. Two years later, T. S. Eliot published his second book with Faber and Faber, which remained his British publisher for the rest of his life. These books, along with plays he wrote in conjunction with his longtime friend and intermittent lover, Christopher Isherwood, established him as an intriguing new voice of the left-wing. In

love with words, and a master of every style of prosody, he wrote prolifically: love lyrics, ballads, poetic dramas, political verse, poems that expressed his fascination with Freudian psychology and philosophy, landscape poetry... the list could go on and on. Although his poetic themes varied broadly, a common trait in many of them involved references to fairy tales and Norse mythology—his family believed they were of Scandinavian descent. Ghosts—representing the Unconscious—haunt people who do not know what to make of these presences. Homely and comforting settings suddenly become frightening: “A crack in the teacup opens / A lane to the land of the dead.” Auden’s linguistic skills draw one in even when one is not immediately certain what he is talking about.

Believing for a time that all artists needed to be “more than a bit of a reporting journalist,” Auden spent nine months in Berlin (1928-29) during the tumultuous and ill-fated Weimar Republic. He also went to Spain during its Civil War



W. H. Auden

(1937), where he controversially wrote “We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and / History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.” George Orwell said this sounded like blaming the victims. Auden and Isherwood also traveled to China during the Sino-Japanese War (1938). These journeys inspired Auden to try his hand at travel writing. In between he worked as a schoolmaster, and in a film unit of the British Post Office where he met and collaborated with composer Benjamin Britten on an opera about Paul Bunyan.

In 1939, Auden and Isherwood moved to the United States, just before the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Auden’s experiences with countries in turmoil had shaken his earlier faith in the idea that human effort could perfect societies. Many Britons resented the defection to a neutral country and considered the pair traitors, avoiding conscription when their country needed them. However, Auden had never been entirely comfortable in the repressed England of his time, where homosexual practice remained illegal. He was mulling over his entire belief system. In some respects, Auden’s journey took an opposite direction to that of his mentor T. S. Eliot,

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W. H. Auden

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who had earlier left the United States to become a British citizen.

Isherwood soon moved to California, while Auden remained in New York City with brief spells of teaching at various American colleges and universities. He fell in love with a young man he had met, Chester Kallman, and considered their relationship a marriage. Around 1940, his poetry deepened and became increasingly philosophical, losing the bravado of some of the earlier work. His rejection of religion had begun in school when, like many adolescents, he decided he no longer believed. His political ideas had something to do with this, and it is likely that his homosexuality may also have played a role. But now, although still rejecting Christianity, he began rereading Augustine. His interest in Freud helped, since the psychoanalyst's understanding of human nature helped revive the notion of Original Sin, which the Enlightenment and the 19th century Gospel of Progress had eroded. Augustine's writings manifest some awareness of the Unconscious, which made him a crucial figure in the development of depth psychology.

Auden still struggled with the belief that Jesus was God, but in other respects his understanding moved ever closer to religious belief. A vital influence was Charles Williams, whom he had met before leaving England. Williams was an editor at Oxford University Press, a poet and novelist, and a

lay theologian. Auden had been struck at the time by Williams's aura of sanctity (as had many others had been, including T. S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis). Now, the poet read his *Descent of the Dove*, an unconventional history of the Church, which profoundly affected him. Williams was also responsible for the publication of the Danish theologian / philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in English, and these works and others convinced Auden that, far from being an outmoded world view, Christianity presented a comprehensive way of understanding and living a good life that was neither selfish nor exploitive of others, but imparted a breadth that Scientific Materialism had only narrowed. In 1941, he started attending early communion services at St. Mark's in the Bowery, an Anglo-Catholic parish in lower Manhattan. In some respects, this marked a return to his family's religious roots, but Auden was also attracted to "Catholic Socialism." Dorothy Day was a good friend. He also developed a close relationship with Reinhold Niebuhr, a theologian and ethicist then teaching at Union Theological Seminary. Already condemned for deserting his native country (Auden became an American citizen in 1945), his conversion further disillusioned those who had seen him as a poet of revolution. But as the friendships with Day and Niebuhr suggest, he remained politically to the left, although no longer glorifying revolution. And he settled happily into the Episcopal Church. Both his grandfathers had been Church of England clergy, so in a sense, this was a return to his roots.

In the wake of his conversion, Auden composed one of his most ambitious poems, "For the Time Being" (1944), in the form of a Nativity Play. One of its early choruses evokes the mood that ultimately led to his conversion:

Alone, alone, about a dreadful wood
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind,
Dreading to find its Father lest it find
The Goodness it has dreaded is not good;
Alone, alone, about our dreadful wood.

The "dreadful wood" is Dante's image of worldly corruption from the opening lines of the *Inferno*,

while the fear of a God who is not “good” has been a motivation for denying his existence. At the Annunciation, Gabriel tells Mary,

When Eve, in love with her own will,
Denied the will of Love and fell,
She turned the flesh Love knew so well
To knowledge of her love until
Both love and knowledge were of sin:
What her negation wounded, may
Your affirmation heal to-day;
Love’s will requires your own, that in
The flesh whose love you do not know,
Love’s knowledge into flesh may grow.

This stanza recalls Charles Williams’s interpretation of the Fall: that in eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve took on this knowledge in themselves so that evil became part of their natures. Eve disobeyed God, who is Love, by allowing herself to be tempted by the serpent, while Mary, by saying “yes” to the Creator, can restore the balance by bearing the Word made Flesh who will redeem fallen mankind.

“The Temptation of Joseph” provides a parallel with Adam succumbing to sin. Joseph’s fear that Mary has betrayed him is contradicted by Gabriel, but when Joseph asks for some kind of sign the angel tells him he must accept and believe. Around this time, Auden discovered that Kallman, to whom he considered himself married, had taken a new lover, and told the poet they must no longer have sexual relations. Auden was devastated. In the first few months he confessed he had considered murdering both the new lover and Kallman, but soon reconciled himself to taking a paternal interest in his former spouse. The two continued to live together most of the time, although each took separate partners. For Auden, this reconciliation was another test of his Christianity, but one that ultimately made him all the more committed to his faith.

“For the Time Being” provides a fascinating perspective on the Incarnation in a setting that often seems like the Present. King Herod is a liberal



W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman

whose objection to Christ’s coming is not that He would challenge the Tetrarch’s authority but that “God would expect every man, whatever his fortune, to lead a sinless life in the flesh and on earth.” Herod ends by complaining, “I want everyone to be happy.” He then orders the massacre of the Innocents so that worldliness might prevail, while lamenting its necessity. The poetic drama ends with the Flight into Egypt, and a final chorus inviting humanity to “follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness” where

He is the Truth.
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;
You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years.

The city is, of course, the heavenly Jerusalem, our true home for which we were created. While it is not clear whether “For the Time Being” was meant to be staged, I have seen several effective productions of it. In its own way, it is as fine a religious play as Eliot’s “Murder in the Cathedral.”

With age, Auden became an increasingly eccentric figure, always wearing slippers and unkempt clothes spotted with food and cigarette ash. After the early years of his conversion, his poetry was not overtly

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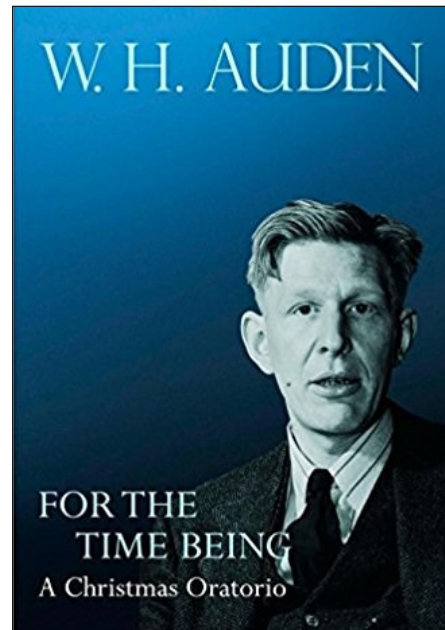
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religious, but he became one of the greatest poets of living in the body, which he saw as always fallible, yet our connection to Christ's Incarnation, since He became fully human to make us become more like Him. Even before his conversion, he had been fascinated with the conception of *Agape*: the Love of God for humanity and our love for God, but also our love for creation and the ability to love one's neighbor as oneself. As he wrote in the 1950s, "If equal affection cannot be, / Let the more loving one be me," a thoroughly Christian desire for one's fellow beings. In his later collected works, starting in 1945, he omitted several of his most popular poems written before his conversion, repudiating their ideas. Auden was always generous to others in all respects—a truly good man with a strong sense of ethics.

At the time of Prayer Book Reform, he served for a while on the Committee working on the new Psalter, though ultimately he rejected the idea of reforming liturgical language, considering that contemporary English was much diminished from the 16th and 17th centuries. For a time, he attended an Orthodox parish, preferring the notion of a sacred language to any attempt to modernize:

The Book of Common Prayer we knew
Was that of 1662:
Though with-it sermons may be well,
Liturgical reforms are hell

However, when Oxford offered him a position, he returned in 1972 to his native country and to the Church of England. His best lectures and prose writings of this period are collected in *The Dyer's Hand* (1962), a thoroughly enchanting and wise book. He continued his somewhat lonely but busy life until his sudden death in 1973, and was buried near his summer home in Kirchstetten, Austria. He had written over 30 books, and composed libretti (with Chester Kallman) for operas by such outstanding 20th century composers as Benjamin Britten, Igor Stravinsky, and Hans Werner Henze.



At the time of his death, many obituaries portrayed him as never fulfilling his early promise. It became common to claim that his gifts came too easily and kept him from the ambitious themes that Eliot achieved, that too often he cared more

about sound than sense. This is a frequent reaction against writers celebrated during their lifetimes. Fortunately, in Auden's case, a more serious examination of his prolific body of work is restoring his reputation as a serious and unique talent, and a profound philosophical genius. As he said in the last poem he wrote,

our school text-books lie.
What they call history
is nothing to vaunt of,

Being made, as it is,
by the criminal in us.
Goodness is timeless.



ANNUAL MEETING ADDRESS

by Fr. Alexander
Sunday 28 January 2018

This past Friday (January 26), the Episcopal News Service reported a study of spiritual growth in the Episcopal Church conducted by Forward Movement Publications, based in Cincinnati. The findings were, well, interesting; and I want to read a few paragraphs from the report:

“How can the Episcopal Church feed Episcopalians’ hunger for spiritual growth in the 21st century? Forward Movement surveyed 12,000 people from more than 200 Episcopal congregations for answers, producing a report released this week that provides a snapshot of the spiritual life of the church

“We have learned that there is great spiritual hunger among Episcopalians’, [said] the Rev. Jay Sidebotham. ‘And we are discovering catalysts that can address that hunger. Basic spiritual practices such as daily prayer, scripture study, worship attendance, and serving the poor will lead to transformation’ ...

“The report also emphasizes what churches can do to support Episcopalians’ spiritual journey ... Four key catalysts are

- engagement with scripture,
- the transforming power of the eucharist,
- a deeper prayer life
- and the heart of the congregation’s leader.

“If we want our congregations to be places where spiritual growth is happening, we need to teach and to nurture spiritual practices such as prayer, worship, study, and service’, the Rev. Scott Gunn, executive director of Forward Movement, said in the press release.”

One of the online comments responded: “We needed a report to tell us this?” But I find it en-

couraging that such ideas are making headway in the wider Church! While the vocabulary is slightly different, the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church has been commending and teaching such practices all along.

Two weeks ago, indeed, I said something similar in my sermon. Reflecting on Jesus calling the disciples to follow him, I suggested that God calls all Christians to a deeper engagement with him. This call is threefold: to know, love, and serve the Lord. It follows that the God-given purpose of any parish or congregation is, first and foremost, to be a community that helps people to grow in the knowledge, love, and service of God. This is true both individually and communally.

While this call is universal, directed to all of us and not just a special few, it takes an absolutely unique form for each person. We are each called to know, love, and serve God in a way that’s specifically tailored to our own personality and our own individual gifts.

At the same time, each parish has its corporate personality, with its unique range of gifts. So, the parish exists not only to facilitate the individual spiritual journeys of its members, but also to undertake its own spiritual journey drawing on all the gifts and callings of its members. In other words, S. Stephen’s Church in Providence is called to grow in the knowledge, love, and service of God in a way that’s different from any other parish or congregation. Hearing and responding to this call together, we make our own unique contribution to the life of the Church and the world.

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It's worth reminding ourselves periodically of these basic truths because in a time of uncertainty, anxiety, and tension—such as we're certainly experiencing in the wider world—we need an overarching vision to keep us focused. We need this theological and spiritual yardstick by which to measure and evaluate all we do as a parish, and to set our goals for the future.

Looking back, 2017 has been a year of transition in our parish's life. We've undertaken a major restructuring of our staff to control costs and reduce the amount drawn from the endowment to fund operating expenses.

At the end of May, we bade goodbye to Fr. Martin Yost, and began re-envisioning how S. Stephen's might continue to reach out to the student community and keep up the weekly round of daily Offices and Masses with one full-time priest on staff. At the end of August, we bade goodbye to Cory MacLean, who had been employed as full-time Parish Administrator for three years, and as part-time Parish Secretary for thirteen years before that.

And we've welcomed and brought on board a new team of part-time staff members: on the clergy side, Fr. Michael Pearson, who assists on Sundays and is currently taking two of the weekday Masses. And on the lay side, Susan Rozzero, Office Assistant; Jacob Ihnen, Communications Director; and Diamond Centofanti, Sexton. Getting to know these new team members, learning to appreciate and understand how best to deploy their talents, has been a great joy. We've been on a steep learning curve together; and while the process has not been without a few hiccups, it's gone much better than I expected, or had any right to expect. They truly are a wonderful team.

Through it all, working together with James Busby, we've continued to develop the parish's tradition of liturgical and musical excellence. I thank

James for his support and friendship, now in our eighteenth year of working together.

In last year's Rector's Report, I mentioned the need for new approaches to evangelism and stewardship if we're to overcome the challenges we face as a parish. Those are very much still on the agenda. To be honest, during 2017 managing the transitions associated with our staff restructuring has consumed so much energy and attention that there's been opportunity for little else. My goal is to forge ahead in these areas in 2018 and beyond.

Whatever programs and events we may devise, we need to keep in mind the main purpose of any parish or congregation as a microcosm of the Church Catholic. The question we need always to be asking ourselves as we evaluate existing programs or consider new ones is how they will help us to hear and respond to God's call to know, love, and serve him in this life, with the hope of enjoying him forever in the next. That needs to be the beginning, middle, and end of everything that we're about.

One of the four catalysts of spiritual growth mentioned in the Forward Movement report is "the heart of the congregation's leader." That's a daunting challenge, because those of us entrusted with the cure of souls know, at least deep down, how unworthy we are of this high calling. (Or if we don't, we should!)

What this means, however, is that for parishes to be places of spiritual growth and vitality, Rectors and Priests-in-Charge need to give the lead in seeking to hear and respond to God's call in their own lives as well as in the lives of their congregations. We're all in this together. So, today, I want to recommit myself to the same journey that I'm commending to all of us. How is God calling me to grow together with you in the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord? That's the question I'll be asking myself in the coming weeks, months, and years as, God willing, we continue to advance the life and mission of Saint Stephen's Church in Providence.

THOUGHTS ON LENT AND THE DEPARTED

by Nancy Gingrich

The season of Lent is upon us. The makings for pancakes have been put away and the imposition of ashes may have already happened by the time this article is read.

We have all lost someone who has made a big mark on our lives—some good and some bad. Sometimes the memories can be hard. So as Christians, how do we handle this Lenten season? The wearing of ashes has, hopefully, knocked us off our egotistical “high horse” once again and brought us to a more quiet and thoughtful frame of mind.

As we consider our relationships to the people in our lives, things can get a bit messy. It's one thing to deal with those who are still with us, but it's very different when we think of those who have died. Did they leave on good terms with us? Were the final words a quarrel or an insult? Are we holding a grudge and still waiting for an apology? To refer to a wise statement made by Fr. Alexander in one of his Guild of All Souls homilies, the trespasses of the departed are between them and God. It is not for us to adjudicate.



Madonna and Child with Souls in Purgatory
by Luca Giordano (1634 - 1705)

On the other hand, we had a part in our relationship with the departed. Whether close or casual, we are also accountable for our things done and left undone. Were the last words said from our mouth loving, forgiving, or comforting? Lent is the season for reflecting on these thorny issues. Our dialogue is not with the departed anymore, but with God. We also need to seek forgiveness for our less than perfect relationship with the departed and give thanks for the good times. Perhaps even a confession with a priest or spiritual advisor is in order. Lent is the time to do spiritual house-cleaning and, thanks to Jesus

Christ our Lord and Saviour, receive forgiveness and absolution. His gift of death and resurrection gives us the hope that we will see our loved ones again. Praise be to God!



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Visit our website @ www.sstephens.org

THE DAILY OFFICE ONLINE

by Bill Dilworth

In Confirmation Class as a middle schooler, I learned how to use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer's Orders for Daily Morning and Evening Prayer as a basis of personal prayer. They have remained an important (if woefully inconsistent) part of my personal religious life over the years.

After taking a teaching position in North Attleborough several years ago and adopting a schedule that starts pretty early in the morning, reciting the Daily Offices presented a challenge -- I didn't have time to say

Morning Prayer before hitting the highway early to avoid traffic. Saying it at my desk wasn't easy, either. *The Daily Office Book* wasn't designed to be portable - its gilt-edged bible paper pages are unprotected and are easily ruined if the book is tumbled around in a backpack or briefcase or jammed into a desk drawer. I had a two-in-one BCP and Bible that was small and closed with a zipper, but the only version of the scriptures available in that binding was the NRSV, which I don't care for. I wanted more options. I looked for them online via my iPhone, but was disappointed. The websites that claimed to offer the Daily Office from the BCP seemed to be run by amateurs who fell into two categories: the uninformed sort with good intentions and those with particular theological axes to grind. Neither sort of webmaster hewed very



The Venerable Bede Translates John
by James Doyle Penrose (1862-1932)

close to the rubrics of the BCP. A few years ago, though, that changed for the better with the addition of two online resources: St. Bede's Breviary and the Forward Movement website and application.

St. Bede's Breviary is the creation of Derek Olsen, one of the editors of the recently revised Saint Augustine's Prayer Book. It provides multiple options for configuring the service to meet your needs: you can choose not only between Rite One and Rite Two but between Coverdale and the 1979 BCP for the Psalms and among sev-

eral versions of the Bible. You can choose how many readings to include, what canticles to follow them, and so on. Or you can choose one of several preset configurations. There are optional additions like the Angelus and the Marian anthems and psalm and canticle antiphons. It is the best Daily Office website out there, in my opinion, presenting the user with the widest range of choices.

St. Bede's does have its own problems, however. It usually works fine on a computer or laptop, but its mobile version is quirky, and its preferences don't always stick. There are occasional technical problems with the desktop version, but Dr. Olsen is quick to resolve them. Even with these problems, this is my preferred online source for Morning and Evening Prayer.

The Forward Movement version of the Daily Office offers fewer options than St. Bede's, but I was pleasantly surprised at the choices it did leave to the user, especially the one between the Coverdale Psalter and the 1979 BCP's. Its smartphone application has fewer bells and whistles, and the services are rubrical but unexpansive. It seems to suffer fewer technical problems than St. Bede's, though.

A curious common trait of both websites is that they take the lectionary's suggestion of reading the Gospel in the evening in Year 1 and in the morning at Year 2 as just that - a suggestion. Forward Movement doesn't offer you the opportunity to make a choice. St Bede's asks if you want to act in accordance with the lectionary's suggestion, but doesn't pay any attention to your answer. Whether you want it or not, you're getting the Gospel in the evening with both websites. Of course, this means that even if you recite only Morning Prayer in its online version and use real books for Evening Prayer, the choice of evening readings has been made for you.

My discovery of these websites has made my mornings easier, and they continue to. Lately I've added a new component to my morning work routine by walking around the school and racking up paces on my pedometer (I'm given to understand that if I walk 10,000 steps a day I'll be immortal, so it's an important addition). Because of time I have to multi-task, so I say Morning Prayer at 6:30 AM while I hike through the school's empty hallways with either St. Bede's or Forward Movement on my iPhone. It's a good way to start the day.

Saint Bede's online Breviary may be found at: <http://www.stbedeproductions.com/breviary/>

The Forward Movement online Daily Office may be found at : <http://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>

LENTEN PROGRAMS 2018

Stations of the Cross

Fridays at 6 pm

February 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23

Supper and Video / Discussion Series:

"Growing a Rule of Life"

Video Series Produced by the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE)

Sundays 6—8 pm

February 18, 25, March 4, 11, 18

Lenten Quiet Day

March 3, 9 am—2 pm

Addresses: Sr. Adele Marie, SSM, Superior, Society of Saint Margaret, Duxbury, MA

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday

Morning Prayer & Low Mass 8 am
Solemn High Mass 10 am

Monday, Wednesday

Evening Prayer 5:30 pm
Low Mass 6 pm

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Noonday Prayer 12 pm
Low Mass 12:10 pm

Saturdays and Federal Public Holidays

Morning Prayer 9:30 am
Low Mass 10:00 am

All welcome — Please join us



Quodlibet

by James Busby

quodlibet (kwäd'lə 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



Instead of a report submitted at the Annual Meeting I shall use some of *Quodlibet* to recount the season and thus save paper!

The Schola Cantorum remains in excellent health within strictures of budget and the very tight rehearsal schedule. As many know, most of our corporate work is done early on Sunday Mornings, sometimes after Mass, and usually working the hard parts a week or two in advance. Without a group cheerfully willing to do the requisite homework and a modicum of organization on my part this would be impossible. Indeed, other parishes have the luxury of two rehearsals in advance of the Sunday morning warm-up; I manage to thrive on our schedule and it doesn't give us time to lose our musical edge!

The 2017 season heard 44 different settings of The Mass Ordinary, consisting of four or five movements each, depending on the season (four in Lent and Advent), ranging from medieval chant to twenty-first century works with wet ink! With these were at least sixty anthems, motets, and canticles, and countless pieces of miscellaneous chant. My deadline would be fiction if I enumerated all.

Highlights of the season included Advent Lessons and Carols sung in memory of former Schola member Morgan Stebbins and the gift of an anonymous donor. Duruflé Requiem accompanied brilliantly by Ross Wood, organist. A sort of "come-back" organ recital by our friend and colleague Mark Dwyer, Organist and Choirmaster at Church of the Advent, Boston, after his extended illness and leave from his duties at that church. His playing was imbued with his accustomed elegance. Gifts to Special Music Fund permitted the inclusion



Clara Brown

of other instruments at various times including Easter; Pentecost with Stravinsky Mass, *in memoriam* Malcolm Donald Hyman and Nancy Jean Pettin-gell, both lovers of Stravinsky's music; and brass for Marian Procession in memory of former warden Homer Shirley.

My heartfelt thanks to those that make all this possible and it remains my privilege to address my twenty-fourth season in service to the parish.

A few bits from Schola members ... We welcome new soprano, **Clara Brown**. Clara offers: "A New Hampshire native, Clara migrated south to com-

plete her undergraduate studies in both Vocal Performance and Women's and Gender Studies at the College of Charleston in South Carolina. She has participated in several musical endeavors since this time, including her tenure as a staff singer at Grace Church Cathedral in Charleston, and more recently as a member of the Trinity Church, Copley Square, Boston choir. Clara recently relocated to Providence to take on a position as a podcast booking agent and continues to work as a counselor at McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA."

Sister Kristina Francis, SSM, writes: "During the choir break I was given the opportunity to visit our sisters in Haiti. I was last there four years ago and it was exciting to see how much progress has been made since my last visit. New buildings are springing up and most of the rubble has been removed. Evidence of the massive earthquake eight years ago is still visible and it is painful to see the remaining ruins in areas when countless lives were lost in that brief 40 seconds. But the Haitians are a resilient and determined people and they are continuing the work of rebuilding and thriving in the new normal.

"The Sisters have just moved into a new building on the campus of our primary mission work in Haiti, the Foyer Notre Dame, a home for indigent elderly women. Their previous lodging was a rental house up in the hills overlooking the city. This house was lovely and we were ever so grateful to an Associate who rented it to us after the earthquake. However, it was a fair distance from the work the Sisters were engaged in, meaning long hours spent in traffic and lots of money spent on gas. The new location in the city is walking distance to a number of places they work, as well as markets and shops. It is a bit like downtown New York City – Port-au-Prince is another city that never sleeps. In the evening sitting out on the roof one can hear a prayer meeting, cheers from the stadium close by as well as disco and pop music from the many restaurants and bars in the area. It is a vibrant setting and even with the noise the Sisters



Two Sisters of St. Margaret and their winsome charges

are pleased with their new location.

"While I was there we had a chance to do a number of day trips including a trip to the beach and a trip to the mountains. Yes, Port-au-Prince is crowded and dusty and loud, but the countryside is so very beautiful! The waters at the beach are clear bright blue and the views of the verdant green hills in the mountains are lovely. Up in the hills there are numerous farms built into the sides of the mountains and an enormous variety of produce is grown. Meals are filled with fresh fruit and vegetables, and the most delicious sauces to go with beans, plantains and rice.

"Even with my very minimal French I was welcomed warmly and had a great time touring several schools. I hope to return soon to this exciting and beautiful country and perhaps spend more time with the children."

Lori Harrison recently celebrated her seventieth birthday (she makes no bones about it) and I recount that only because her voice is as young

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Birthday girl, Lori Harrison

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sounding as when I first heard it many decades ago. She recently reminded me that I played for her lessons as a student at New England Conservatory and our lives have traversed since then. She started her vocal career as “first chair” soprano at the Church of the Advent, Boston, under the late Choirmaster Phillip Steinhaus. She was soloist with the Boston Camarata for many seasons and performed with Pomerium Consort in New York. She completed thirty years in the vocal ensemble at Temple Sinai, Brookline which was known for the excellence of its music program and sang for me some at my former position in Hingham, MA, whenever I could engage her. Her continued devotion to our work at S. Stephen’s means so much. In addition to this she remains active in the travel field booking tours for such groups as Boston Early Music Festival, The Kennedy Center, Washington, and The British Embassy, London, as well as work with touring Cuban dance groups.

Ash Wednesday and Allegri’s *Miserere*...

Greta Garbo taught us that Secrecy, inaccessibility, and mystery have a certain cachet and this fact was no news some time earlier to Pope Urban VIII (1568 - 1644), who ordered Psalm 51 - *Miserere mei*, to be sung at Tenebrae services Wednesday and Friday of Holy Week in his Sistine Chapel. Of the twelve or so settings used, the 1638 version by Gregorio Allegri remains the most compelling with its repeated and sensuous arching phrases taking the highest voice reaching to high C, the sonic apex of choral music. The alternating verses sung in plainchant help keep the appropriate sobriety of the psalm and are the device used to carry the text. Over the years the Vatican allowed only three copies outside the confines of the chapel. One to Holy Roman Emperor, one for King John of Portugal (composer of *Crux fidelis* which we sing on Good Friday) and the last for a prominent musical historian, Dr. Charles Burney. Threat of excommunication succeeded in keeping the music in house. These versions didn’t contain the stratospheric ornaments, and this made King John complain! Indeed, the ornaments would never have been sung the same way twice, being improvised on the spot.



Lori H. and Choirmaster avant le cinéma

The story goes that in 1770 fourteen-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart happened to be in Rome with his father, stopped in the chapel for Tenebrae service on Wednesday, and with his accustomed precocity went home and copied the *Miserere* by memory. He then went back on Friday to listen again to facilitate some tweaks. In his manuscript the secret ornaments (if we believe this) were now out and public domain. Dr. Charles Burney in England made the first published version, and there's good reason to think Mendelsohn had his hands in published editions as well, including taking it to a key with the highest notes.

By the eighteenth century the Sistine Chapel Tenebrae services began attracting tourists on a substantial scale, the *Miserere* setting being the principal draw. At every occurrence of the four-part verses containing the ornaments, Mendelsohn later observed, "a visible excitement pervades all present ... and whenever people say that the voices do not sound like those of men, but like angels from on high ... it is to this particular embellishment that they invariably allude."

What a glorious way to welcome the gift of Lent.

Yrs, Jas.



Ariel Halt, Bob Henry, Deborah Abel, Jason Connell, and James Busby practice ornaments of Allegri Miserere which seem "...spun of sixteen shimmers" to borrow from J. Joyce.



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