

# The S. Stephen

## Eastertide

### 2013

Vol. 12, No. 4

My dear people:

*From the Rector*

A poster circulating on the internet proclaims, “Easter is Fifty Days!” – that is, from Easter Sunday until the Day of Pentecost. According to another liturgical tradition in the West, however, the “Paschal Fifty Days” begins on Low Sunday, after Easter Week, and continues until the Eve of Trinity Sunday, thus incorporating both Ascension and Pentecost. But that is no great matter. The point is that Easter is a season, not a day – a joyous season variously known as Eastertide or Paschaltide.

This Easter Season brings great joy to our parish in particular. We kept a good Lent, as reflected in attendance at Mass and participation in our Lenten programs including the Quiet Day, Friday evening Stations of the Cross, and the really superb Sunday evening series on “Forgiveness and Reconciliation” organized by Karen Williams. This issue of *The S. Stephen* includes my Good Friday sermon, which reflects on one of the movies we watched, as well as the book we read, during that series.

The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter Sunday were likewise well attended; and I am enormously grateful to everyone – especially the Choir, Servers, Lectors, Ushers, and Altar Guild – who put in so much time, effort, and loving care and attention to their execution. It is an exhausting but exhilarating time. The liturgical commemoration of our Lord’s suffering, death, and Resurrection helps renew my faith, and contributes to my sense of joy in the Easter Season. Participation in this year’s cycle of these ancient liturgies made me especially thankful to be at S. Stephen’s.

On Tuesday in Easter Week, we announced the appointment of Fr. Blake Sawicky as our new Curate and Episcopal Campus Minister. For the past two years, Fr. Sawicky has been Curate at the Cathedral of Saint John in Denver, Colorado. “Second curacies” are not as common as they once were, but they remain a venerable tradition, and we are blessed to have a priest with Fr. Sawicky’s prior formation and experience coming to join our team. The letter announcing his appointment is reproduced elsewhere in this issue of *The S. Stephen*.

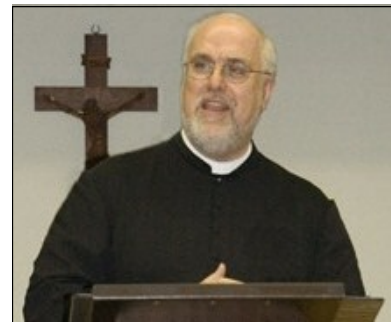
In one respect, Fr. Sawicky’s position differs from that of his predecessor, Fr. Michael Tuck, who worked half time for the parish, in his capacity as Curate, and half time for the diocese, in his capacity as Episcopal Campus Minister – that is, in two separate positions on two separate payrolls. Fr. Sawicky will be working full time for the parish, with half of his position funded by the diocese with the understanding that a corresponding amount of his time will be devoted to

the campus ministry. In other words, the diocese is now effectively *subcontracting* the campus ministry to S. Stephen’s – and as a parish we will be accountable to the bishop for our work in this area. This new arrangement was proposed by Bishop Knisely, and we eagerly agreed. It represents a definite step forward in cooperation between the diocese and parish in recognition of our common interest in a strong Episcopal presence among the Brown and RISD communities.

One less-than-positive note: at the time of writing I am trying without great success to find people to fill up the remaining slots in our parish retreat to be held at St. Edmund’s Retreat Center on Enders Island in Mystic, Connecticut, from April 19 to 21. In my formative years as a young adult in the Episcopal Church and the Church of England, overnight silent retreats of several days’ duration were popular, especially in Anglo-Catholic parishes. Perhaps because of the complexities of contemporary life, fewer and fewer people seem willing or able to set aside the time for them; and I know that their cost can be a factor as well. However, for economic reasons the retreat centers themselves are becoming more and more inflexible in their group booking requirements: they need significant deposits with firm commitments as to numbers well in advance. Thus, we find ourselves in the unenviable position of having to book the retreat and reserve a certain number of spaces many months – sometimes more than a year – ahead of time, and then after certain cutoff dates we become liable for the full cost regardless of whether we have been able to recruit the necessary numbers. This is obviously a less-than-optimal situation financially; and it may well mean that in future years we will need to rethink the viability of parish-sponsored retreats as we have hitherto organized them. The sad irony is a small number of committed souls have attended these retreats in the past, often despite initial misgivings, and will now be tremendously disappointed if this opportunity is no longer offered.

On a more positive note, we are looking forward eagerly to hosting the annual Mass and Meeting of the American region of the Society of Mary on May 3 and 4.

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We will be welcoming Bishop Lindsay Urwin, Administrator of the Anglican Shrine at Walsingham, as our guest speaker and preacher. A flyer with details of the program is included in this issue of The S. Stephen. Please post, distribute, or otherwise [legally] disseminate them wherever they may be likely to do some good in spreading the news of this event – a definite highlight of the year in our parish life.

Some months ago, the Council of the Society of Mary asked me if I would consider election to the position of Superior of the American Region, to succeed my friend [and sometime seminary field-work supervisor] the Rev. Dr. Richard Cornish Martin, SSC, who will be stepping down as of this meeting. I did not seek this honor, and agreed with considerable trepidation. Fr. Martin's shoes will be impossible to fill. But I will do my best with God's help and your prayers to exercise what leadership I can for the Society of Mary in the years ahead. I firmly believe that the four principal Anglo-Catholic devotional societies in this country – the Society of Mary, the Guild of All Souls, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Society of King Charles the Martyr – have a vital role to play in today's Episcopal Church as witnesses to the faith once delivered to the saints, especially as they are not political organizations; they focus on building up faith and devotion rather than engaging in the current controversies in the Church. It is a great privilege to participate in their work.

This letter comes with all best wishes and prayers for a joyous remainder of the Paschal Season. I remain, faithfully,  
Your pastor and priest,

*Fr. John D. Alexander +*

Fr. John D. Alexander

## FROM OUR JUNIOR WARDEN: CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

*By Susan Brazil*

Recently I was talking to a fellow parishioner about a future little project that I am planning for my home. I am saving change for the project and only time will tell when I will have accumulated sufficient funds. At that moment, it suddenly occurred to me that our Capital Campaign is like my project at home.

As you know, we as a parish are contributing monies to a special fund so that the windows and sanctuary of our spiritual home can be maintained and preserved, and our Great Hall redesigned into a more beautiful and usable space. At this time, I would like to provide a progress report.

Currently, we are accepting pledges and contributions to be deposited into the Capital Campaign account. We are consulting experts on the best way to restore and clean the stained glass windows. We are accepting bids from three contractors so that we have a realistic cost expectation for construction on the Great Hall. In the future, we will be contacting various floor companies to evaluate the sanctuary floor to determine the best course of action to repair it and the respective cost. We are particularly grateful for the generosity of those friends of Alan Reniere, including many non-parishioners, who gave gifts to the Capital Campaign Fund in his memory. Alan loved S. Stephen's and did much to enrich its fabric in his time as Senior Warden. We honor his memory.

I am sure you must have noticed that there are many exciting things happening within the parish. We are publicizing many exciting events, and those that have already happened are well planned and beautiful. Some of our fellow parishioners have been reaching out to visitors and made them feel welcome. Last but not least, I feel that I have gotten to know many of you better.

I believe that the Capital Campaign has brought us all closer together. Our common vision has enabled us to reach out to one another in a common goal. We would like to invite everyone to volunteer on one of the committees. I know that our time is a valuable commodity. Many of us are afraid that we will be called to endless meetings. This does not have to be the case. But it would be nice if you could contact Karen and volunteer your time at the next event to set up. It would be wonderful if you could contact Ed or Cathy and ask how you could help on a Sunday morning and greet new comers and/or visitors. It would be really appreciated if you could contact Bill or Ernie and ask how you could assist them in advertising a future event.

My mother use to say, many hands make light work. As a congregation, together we will accomplish our mission.

Thank you.



*Tiffany Window, North Aisle*

## Fr. Alexander Announces Curacy Appointment

April 3, 2013

Easter Wednesday

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint Stephen's,

It gives me great pleasure to announce the appointment of the Rev'd Blake A. Sawicky as our new Curate and Episcopal Campus Minister. Fr. Sawicky will begin his duties at S. Stephen's on June 1, 2013. He is single, and will be living in one of the fourth floor apartments in the Guild House.

Since June 2011, Fr. Sawicky has served as Curate at the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John in Denver, Colorado. He is a graduate of Yale Divinity School [M.Div., 2011] with a Diploma in Anglican Studies from the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale. He also holds degrees from University College, London, in Maritime Archeology [M.A., 2007], and Wheaton College, Illinois, in History and Ancient Near Eastern Archeology [B.A., 2006].

Fr. Sawicky writes: "I sing and play the piano, and enjoy fly fishing, hiking, SCUBA diving, art, music, literature. I enjoy volunteering with various service organizations, which have included the Red Cross, World Relief, Habitat for Humanity, and others. I am also a member of the Guild of All Souls, and I currently sit on the Colorado State Board of Medical Examiners."

Fr. Sawicky's appointment is very good news for S. Stephen's and the Episcopal community at Brown and RISD. I know you will all join me in doing everything possible to make him welcome.

Faithfully,

Fr. John D. Alexander

*Rector*

## A Letter from our New Curate *The Rev'd Blake Sewicky*



Dear St. Stephen's,

I am very glad finally to be greeting you! It has been exciting these past few months to learn more about the parish and the important ministry you carry out in College Hill, Providence, New England, and beyond. I am looking forward to joining you at the beginning of June.

St. Stephen's sits at the confluence of three great spheres of Christian life: first and fore-

most, the worship of almighty God, adorned with all the beauty of our tradition, set in a community of people who love one another. Second, the development of young persons who will go on to be leaders in the church, in all facets of civic life, and in culture. And third, the generous, attentive care of those in need. St. Stephen's intentional, affectionate engagement in all three of these spheres bears witness to the grace of God active in the world, and provides a beacon of hope to all those with whom you come in contact.

I am still a young priest, coming to you with two years of ordained experience. But I am very excited to be

with you in worship and service, and in all the changing circumstances of life together. Thanks to Fr. Tuck, the college ministry has a strong foundation, upon which it will be my task to build. I am looking forward to working under the leadership of Fr. Alexander and the bishop to lead it into the next stage of its life.

My first Sunday in Providence will be June 2, Corpus Christi. I am glad that my first Sunday with you is a feast which celebrates the life of the church, and encourages all the baptized to be effective signs of the reconciliation of heaven and earth. You are all in my prayers as I conclude my curacy at St. John's Cathedral in Denver, and I ask you for your prayers also. Until June-

Yours faithfully,

*Blake*

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## From the Sacristy

By Phoebe Pettingell

### *Behind the Scenes*

Those who are directly involved in some aspect of the liturgies of Holy Week and the Great Three Days will know what I mean when I talk about “living through them.” No other part of the Church Year involves such intensity of “doing” as well as praying. Both the doing and the praying are worship: *Ora est Labora* (Prayer is Work), and, if properly done, *Labora est Ora*. Your clergy, choir, servers, altar guild, flower arrangers and ushers do not scramble frantically around, “stressed out” and frantic, to put on a show for an audience. The prep-

Jesus, and various other figures in the drama—hearkening back to ancient plays in which three actors and a chorus enacted stories of gods’ interactions with humans. It is stylized in its ritual so that we may concentrate on the words and events of Christ’s agony in the garden of Gethsemane, his trials before Herod and Pilate, his humiliations and walk to Golgotha, then his crucifixion. The play is all the more moving because it does not focus on our feelings or the emotions of those who were present on that day—much less speculate about how Jesus himself must have felt—instead, we observe the events as they unfold before us and intersect with wherever we are in our own lives.

But Palm Sunday is just a foretaste of things to come, as the earthly ministry of Jesus hurries towards its end. By Maundy Thursday, the veils turn to white. The Altar of Repose is readied with flowers in the Lady Chapel (thank you, Karen and Cathy for all your beautiful arranging). The ciborium with the Blessed Sacrament is taken from the tabernacle on the altar and locked in a “place apart” (the Tabernacle in the Priest’s Sacristy) until after the first celebration of Mass at the Easter Vigil. If there is a life-and-death emergency between the Maundy Thursday Mass and the Easter Vigil, this will be the Sacrament used to communicate the gravely ill. Once again, the Maundy Thursday service begins in joy, with the Gloria and bells which are otherwise unheard during Lent. Yet by the time the Sacrament from the Altar of celebration is moved to the Altar of repose, we are once again sorrowful as Christ asks us to watch and pray with him. The peaceful silence of the Lady Chapel filled with flowers and silent worshipers contrasts with the agony and bloody sweat of our Lord as He prepares for what must come. In the meantime, the other altars have been stripped by clergy and acolytes and are bare. Crosses are removed. Eamon Duffy called his book about the dissolution of the monasteries in England and the banning of certain beloved ritual practices under Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I, *The Stripping of the Altars*, likening the grief of those who loved the Medieval practices of the Church to the desolation we experience as a congregation on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

In common with the other principal Holy Week services, Good Friday is made up of various parts. Immovable crosses and statues are now veiled in black. At noon, the hour the gospels tell us when Christ was raised upon the cross, we hear three singers chant the Passion Gospel—this time according to St. John. We pray the Solemn Collects, then venerate the Cross. Finally, we receive “pre-sanctified” hosts from Maundy Thursday—they have been kept on the



*The Altar of Repose*

aration and performance of the Holy Week liturgies need to be, and *are*, done with deliberate mindfulness of Whose Work we are about, and we ponder it in our hearts as we go about our small part of a greater whole.

In the sacristies, we begin setting up for Palm Sunday with red veils for the crosses and statues, and red altar hangings and vestments. When the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem has been reenacted, the Passion Gospel is sung by three men of the choir who take the roles of the narrator,

Altar of Repose until that time. After the service concludes—with no blessing—the church remains open until 3 pm for meditation.

Saturday morning, those of us who work “behind the scenes” assemble to put what was stripped back together. Veils are taken down and the crosses and statues reappear for the first time since Passion Sunday (a week before Palm Sunday). All the furniture is put back in its accustomed places. The Altar Guild puts new fair linens on all the altars and brings out the festal Easter set, embroidered with flowering crosses and the Lamb of God. Gold vestments are laid out, but on top of them we place the violet ones for the last time—these will be worn for the lighting of the Paschal Candle and the Great Vigil. The brazier for the fire is prepared, and vigil candles are fitted into bobeche. There is a mood of expectancy. Christ is not yet risen, but after sunset, sometime during the night He will break the bonds of Death. At the Vigil we light a fire and sit in the dark as did our ancient ancestors, and listen once again to those stories that tell our history: our First Parents in Eden; Noah’s Ark; the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Egypt as they crossed the Red Sea which swallowed up Pharaoh’s army; and so on until the Gloria bursts forth and the first Mass of Easter begins. Then, on Easter morning, we rejoice with the women at the tomb and the disciples whose sorrow is transformed into a joy they could never have anticipated.

To participate in the fullness of this holy time is a privilege in itself. To be part of the behind-the-scene rituals that make it happen helps bring those who do so closer to our Risen Lord. Easter Joy to you all. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!



*Fr. Alexander lights the Paschal fire.  
Photo by Karen Vorbeck Williams*



*The High Altar*



*The crucifix at the High Altar*

## A GOOD FRIDAY SERMON

March 29, 2013

By Fr. Alexander

This year, the theme of our Sunday evening Lenten series was forgiveness and reconciliation. During the course of the series, we watched three movies and read one book. The book was *Free of Charge*, by Miroslav Volf, a professor at Yale Divinity School who was born in Croatia. And one of the movies was the French language film *The Widow of Saint Pierre*. So, by way of a Good Friday sermon, I want to offer some reflections on both the movie and the book.

The film is set on the island of Saint Pierre, a French territorial possession located just off the coast of Newfoundland. The year is 1850, during the short-lived Second French Republic. The movie begins with a senseless murder committed one night by a drunken fisherman, Neel Auguste.

After his arrest, Neel is sentenced to death. Since there is no guillotine on the island, however, the island authorities must send to France for one before the execution can be carried out. And it will take months and months for a guillotine to be shipped to Saint-Pierre.

In the meantime, Neel is delivered into the custody of the local army captain. Skeptical that the guillotine will ever arrive, his wife takes an interest in rehabilitating the convict. She soon has Neel doing odd jobs all over the island – fixing roofs and such – so that he becomes popular, well-loved, and apparently forgiven. It also turns out that Neel has several children by one of the women on the island, and the captain's wife arranges for the local priest to solemnize their marriage.

Meanwhile, the island authorities grow increasingly nervous, knowing that Neel's new-found popularity could cause them problems when the guillotine finally arrives. But



From *'The Widow of St. Pierre'*  
2000

the law must be upheld. They try alternately bullying and cajoling the Captain to restrain his wife's activities on behalf of Neel. But the Captain, deeply devoted to

his wife, refuses to rein her in and insists that the prisoner is his responsibility, not theirs.

In one revealing scene, the captain's wife explains to Neel the philosophy of what she's doing. He was drunk

when he committed the murder, but since he no longer drinks, he's changed. People can change, so they ought to be given second chances. Yet the expression on Neel's face betrays skepticism of such a facile explanation.

When a guillotine finally arrives from Martinique, it becomes clear that even though the islanders have forgiven

him, Neel has not forgiven himself. Deep down, he believes that he must pay the penalty of his crime. He refuses to take advantage of an opportunity to escape to Newfoundland; and when the islanders initially

refuse to unload the ship's cargo, Neel himself enlists for the work because the money he earns will go to support his wife and children once he's dead.

Meanwhile, on account of his defiance of the island authorities, the Captain is sent back to France where he's court-martialed and executed by firing squad for mutiny. And on Saint-Pierre, Neel is finally executed as well.

It's a disturbing movie, devoid of any explicitly religious message. But if I read it correctly, the deaths of both Neel Auguste and the Captain have a dimension of redemptive self-sacrifice. Rather than escape, Neel Auguste chooses to accept the death penalty to expiate the guilt of his crime, and in the process he's able to bequeath a small inheritance to his survivors. Similarly, the Captain loves his wife so much that he accepts death willingly to pay the price of her transgressions of what was acceptable to the island's authorities and their sense of the rule of law and the demands of outraged justice.

As I watched the movie and reflected on it afterwards, I couldn't help wishing that someone had told Neel Auguste that he didn't have to die to expiate the guilt of his crimes, because Christ had already done that for him on the cross. He was already forgiven by God on account of the death of Christ. His faith in that assurance might not have altered the outcome of the story – the wheels of temporal justice would likely have turned inexorably anyway. But then he could at least have faced his death in the confidence that his sins were forgiven, his guilt taken away.

**When someone injures or offends us, we cannot withhold our forgiveness once we see that person as a sinner for whom Christ died, someone who stands forgiven by God in Christ. And just as forgiveness is costly to us, so it's costly to God, for it entails the sacrifice of the cross.**

At some level, Neel understood what the Captain's wife did not: that true forgiveness is always costly. In the book *Free of Charge*, Miroslav Volf makes it clear that to forgive is not to excuse or overlook wrongdoing. If I forgive you for some injury you've caused me, I am simultaneously condemning what you've done as wrong, and also saying that I'm not going to hold it against you. And that kind of forgiveness is costly, because it requires me to bear the injury, to absorb the offense, to let go of the natural desire for compensation or retribution.

Yet Volf is also clear that as Christians we're called to forgive as God has forgiven us. When someone injures or offends us, we cannot withhold our forgiveness once we see that person as a sinner for whom Christ died, someone who stands forgiven by God in Christ. And just as forgiveness is costly to us, so it's costly to God, for it entails the sacrifice of the cross.

Volf does a good job of making clear that Christ's death on the cross is not the unjust punishment of an innocent victim to make satisfaction for human sin. Rather, because Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity, by dying on the cross God himself bears the burden of our sins and absorbs our offenses. Volf writes: "the one who was offended bears the burden of the offense" (p. 145).

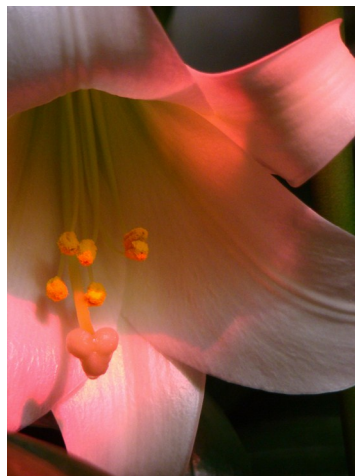
And yet, because Christ is not only truly God but also truly human, his death pays the price of human sin. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes: "One has died for all; therefore all have died." Volf expands on this idea: "Now we see that we were also in Christ. What happened to him happened to us. When he was condemned, we were condemned. When he died, we died" (p. 147). The upshot is that our sinful natures have been crucified with Christ; we're separated from the guilt of our sins; and we're set free from the power of sin itself.

Such is the power of the cross in the life of the Christian. It's the sign of the forgiveness of our sins in virtue of Christ's sacrifice. So, unlike Neel Auguste in *The Widow of Saint-Pierre*, we don't need to die to expiate our sins, because we've already died in Christ. And insofar as we accept God's forgiveness, we can rest assured that Christ has taken away our guilt. We're set free to live in the power of Christ's resurrection, to live in Christ and to have the risen Christ live in us as the source of our life. But that is to get ahead of the story, which we'll pick up again tomorrow evening and on Sunday morning.

## KING JESUS HATH A GARDEN



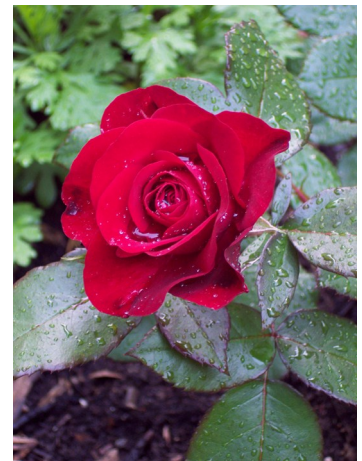
*The poppy represents Christ's passion.*



*The lily is perhaps the best known representation of the Virgin Mary.*



*Columbine represents the Holy Spirit.*



*The red rose symbolizes the suffering of Jesus on the cross.*



*Irises are another common symbol of the Virgin Mary.*

*The daisy represents the Innocence of the Christ Child.*



# Quodlibet

by James Busby

**quodlibet** (kwăd'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*



## *The Paris Diary of Buzz*

My editor suggested this go-round might be used to tell something of what I was doing away from the parish church mid-Lent this year.

As mentioned in the last “Quodlibet,” Father graciously encouraged me to take a Sunday off “in term” to play a concert with Contralto Marion Dry at the American Cathedral in Paris. Marion, an old (30+ year) chum and student and colleague is head of Performing Artists Faculty at Wellesley and a superb singer with an international career.



*Sightseeing in Paris*

With the typical resourcefulness of a church musician, I figured out how to make four hours of work take eight days and was none too sorry for that! My quarters for the duration were a fine apartment on the Place Dauphine on the Île de la Cité in a 1604 building. Hanging out my bedroom window afforded a view, less than a block away, of the flèche of Ste. Chappelle, that astounding medieval repository built by Louis IX to house The Crown of Thorns and his other passion relics. The cathedral of Notre-Dame is located just past that.

Being an indefatigable, but un-imaginative sight-seer and not having been to Paris in over two decades, I hit many of the tourist high points again.... d'Orsay (love the building, less the art).... Pompidou (big Dali and Eileen Gray retrospectives along with the permanent collection of twentieth century art leaves me slack-jawed with awe and wonder) and a very, very long private tour of the Louvre by a doctoral student from Princeton where I gained new-found interest and fondness for antiquities. A short walk

from my temporary home was Musée de Cluny where those wonderful allegories—the unicorn tapestries—were even more moving and splendid than I'd remembered and better lit than twenty years ago; they touch me in the extreme the way the twentieth century things do! Oh, I could witter on for hours!

A mini-pilgrimage to S. Denis where the black marble cenotaphs of the Royal Ossuary (common burying place of remains of the royalty after being unearthed unceremoniously during the Revolution) made me wish I knew more about French history and, if ever inclined to anarchy, though highly unlikely, to swear off it altogether! Visits to the work places of baroque period musical poster boys François Couperin and Marc-Antoine Chapentier—namely St. Ger-vaise and St. Paul-St. Louis respectively—pleased me enormously and an attempted visit to the church dedicated to our patron St. Stephen - St. Étienne du Mont (the musical home of the late Duruflés) was thwarted because it was locked! They have a rood screen too - I remember from decades back!

Saturday night an organ recital was played at Notre-Dame. The nave of that epic space was filled with folk of varying attention spans - clearly “where to be,” however - and the recitalist, though not a headliner, acquitted himself well in a performance of a complete Vienne Symphonie on the organ where Vienne presided and died! (Olivier Latry, the titular organist at Notre-Dame, was in USA about to play within earshot of S. Stephen's at Sayles Hall!)



*Basilique Saint-Denis*

As Sunday was concert day for me there wasn't time to attend S. Sulpice in the morning, once the musical home of both Widor and Dupré and depicted in that movie with Tom Hanks, so I went to Mass at Notre-Dame. A few hours later I played at American Cathedral on what has to be one of the most "interesting" pianos of my career. Once, the possession of Cole Porter (just one of those things, or, more fittingly, as Abelard said to Heloise....) someone had gotten their hands on the Steinway and painted, decoupaged and vernis-martin'ed it to a fare-thee-well. It's mighty hard concentrating to play right notes when Watteau-esque little fig-



*With Marion Dry,  
American Cathedral, Paris*

ures are dancing around one's knuckles, but I prevailed! The picture doesn't do it justice!

After the concert I demurred from tiffin with Wellesley alum ex-pats and ran back to Notre-Dame for Vespers: the Archbishop of Paris, celebrant. The psalmody was a sort of hum-drum affair, most akin to that in what's known in American R.C. circles as Respond and Acclaim, but the warblings of the cantor were commented on in most eloquent manner by the organ. I don't know who was playing, but the improvisations were breath-taking in typical Gallic fashion.

I was grateful for the days away, though Triduum and Easter at S. Stephen's were never far from my mind in my absence. That, now done, I eagerly await what's next!

Yours, though no Rick Steeves,  
*James*

### **Easter Night** by Alice Meynell

All night had shout of men  
And cry of woeful women filled his way;  
Until that noon of sombre sky  
On Friday, clamour and display smote him;  
No solitude had He,  
No silence, since Gethsemane.

Public was death;  
But power, but Might,  
But life again, but Victory,  
Were hushed within the dead of night,  
The shuttered dark, the secrecy.  
And all alone, alone, alone,  
He rose again behind the stone.

*Alice Christiana Gertrude Thomson Meynell (1847-1922) was an English poet, essayist, editor and suffragist. In 1866, she converted to the Roman Catholic Church. She married the magazine publisher, Wilfred Meynell, and two of their eight children became well-known 20th century writers. Alice and Wilfred sponsored many Catholic writers. She was responsible for rescuing and bringing to prominence the soon-to-be famous mystical poet, Francis Thompson, who had become a homeless drug addict. Alice's Catholic faith led her to social activism as a champion of the poor and oppressed. Like "Easter Night," much of her verse is based on Ignatian spirituality.*

### **EPIPHANY SOUP KITCHEN**

Our parish's  
next opportunity to serve is:

**Saturday, May 18**

*"He shall fill the hungry with good things..."*

**ALAN RENIERE**  
**Homily at the Requiem Mass**  
**March 12, 2013**  
*By Father Alexander*

One day in late 1999 or early 2000 – I can't remember which – the phone rang in my study at the Church of the Ascension, Staten Island, New York. The person on the other end of the phone identified himself as Alan Reniere, Senior Warden of Saint Stephen's Church, Providence, Rhode Island.

He explained that he'd been given my name by a mutual friend among the clergy in New York City; and the purpose of the call was to sound me out about the possibility of allowing my name to be put forward for consideration of a call to become the next rector of Saint Stephen's. We had a long and pleasant discussion – as it happened, the first of many.

At length, I arrived in Providence, in the summer of 2000. Alan continued as my Senior Warden for the next eight years, and became a trusted confidant, advisor, and friend.

Early on, he told me that he saw his role as one of getting me started in the office of rector of this somewhat complex parish community, with a sometimes stormy history within recent years. In particular, he wanted to help me learn how to navigate around some of the landmines whose location he knew but as yet I did not. And I can honestly say that the few times I got into trouble in those early years were precisely the times when I acted without first seeking or following his advice.

Alan was well qualified to serve as an advisor to the clergy of Saint Stephen's. Not only did he know and understand the parish very well, but a perhaps little known fact is that he also considered entering the priesthood himself; and he engaged in some discussions with the Bishop and Commission on Ministry on discerning a vocation.

Alas, it was not to be, which is probably just as well. He once told me the story of how his grandmother advised him against the idea. "The problem, Alan," she said, "is that you obviously like 'nice things'; and if you become a priest you'll never be able to afford them!"

I think it's fair to say that Alan came a lot closer to fulfilling his true vocation in the interior design business. He did it well. Many things can be said about Alan's aesthetic sensibilities, and his unique gift for being able to see the potential in a room or hallway, and pick out just the right combination of colors, furnishings, and fabrics to bring it into its own and make it come alive.

But it would be a mistake to stop there. The ancient Greek philosophers spoke of the human quest for the good, the beautiful, and the true. And Alan was no shallow aesthete; for he was just as concerned with the good and the true as he was with the beautiful.

Alan was quite a wit, with a mischievous sense of humor. He especially delighted in puns and plays on words – which he could deploy with marvelous agility and timing to defuse a tense situation and make everyone in the room dissolve into laughter. But he was in no sense a frivolous person. On the contrary, behind the witty repartee was a deeply reflective, serious, and sober mind.

To my mind, Alan's character was marked above all by two characteristics: integrity and compassion. He was always upfront and straightforward. He said what he thought

even if it was not necessarily what one wanted to hear. And he genuinely cared for people in an empathetic way – and not just people but animals too.

And so now he continues his journey. The sad thing about acquiring nice things in this life is that we can't take them with us. We brought nothing into this world and we shall take nothing out.

And yet, the quest for the good, the beautiful, and the true continues. The Church believes and bears witness to the revelation that everything beautiful in this life is but a foretaste, an anticipatory pledge as it were, of the glory that awaits us in the world to come, in

union with the One who is himself perfect goodness, truth, and beauty personified.

Our purpose here today is not merely to remember Alan fondly, or to celebrate his life now ended – for that is only to look back at the past – but rather to pray for his immortal soul and to entrust him into the care and safekeeping of Almighty God, his maker and redeemer, until the Day of Resurrection.

So, here in this Church which Alan loved so well, we are all invited to join our prayers with the angels and saints, that God may bring us all to that place where all human longings for goodness, truth, and beauty find their ultimate fulfillment and consummation, for ever and ever. Amen.



*Senior Warden Alan Reniere*  
*Photo by Karen Vorbeck Williams*

## More Saints for Modern Living: Patrons of Ground Transportation

*By Bill Dilworth*

At a coffee hour some months back, a fellow parishioner asked me if there was a saint whose patronage covered automotive purchases. Extemporizing, I suggested St. Christopher, since he is the patron of travel in general, and perhaps St. Fiacre, patron of taxicabs. When I got home and did a little research, however, I discovered that there is a specific patron saint of cars: St. Frances of Rome.

St. Frances was a 15th century married woman (and, later, a widow) and a Benedictine oblate who lived in



Rome and was canonized in the 1608. It is not very surprising to find that she is the patron of Benedictine oblates, widows, and Roman housewives. Because only five of her children lived past childhood, she is also a patron

of those who have lost a child to death. Also, since the wife of her only surviving son relentlessly harassed and insulted her, St. Frances is the patron of those ridiculed for their piety.

How did a woman who lived hundreds of years before the invention of the automobile become its patron, though? As early as 1925, it became evident that driving is a dangerous undertaking, and that it could not hurt for someone in the Church Triumphant to look after those involved in it. Pope Pius XI declared St. Frances that person, based on a story told about her and her journeys to help the poor. She had to travel at night, and on those nocturnal journeys God sent an angel to walk ahead of her with a lighted lantern to show her the road ahead and protect her from dangers on the way. It is a bit of a stretch from a medieval woman traveling by shank's mare to the modern automobile, but there are more tenuous links between some saints and their area of patronage.

Take St. Fiacre, for example. He was an Irishman who lived in 7th century France as a hermit. He was offered a gift of as much land as he could encircle with a furrow in a single day, and using only the tip of his staff, he ploughed a furrow around a large plot, clearing it miraculously of trees and brush in the bargain. There he built a

cell, and grew his own food and the medicinal herbs he used to treat the sick. He is, therefore, the patron of gardeners (especially those who grow useful plants), ploughboys, and those with various illnesses. He is the patron of those suffering from venereal disease because he assiduously avoided the presence of women. He suffered from a severe case of hemorrhoids, and one particularly painful day he sat on a stone in his garden and prayed for a cure, which was miraculously forthcoming. Hemorrhoid sufferers continue to flock to his shrine to sit on the same stone; it supposedly still bears the imprints of St. Fiacre's own hemorrhoids.

But, taxicabs - what does he have to do with taxicabs? Like Frances of Rome, he lived centuries before cars and taxis existed. It's a little less direct than the story of St. Frances' illuminating angel, but not entirely mystifying. The 17th century Parisian Hôtel de St Fiacre (whose sign bore an image of the saint), was one of the first places one could find taxis for hire. These hackney cabs took the name of Fiacre cabs, later shortened to simply fiacres. Naturally, the drivers of these vehicles adopted St. Fiacre as their heavenly patron, and kept him on when their taxicabs exchanged horses for the internal combustion engine.

The next time you're in the market for a new car, you might solicit Frances' intercession, and Fiacre is available to pray for your garden, taxi rides, and other, more delicate, matters. But don't think that they, or any other saint, are only interested in helping you with their specific areas of patronage - feel free to ask the prayers of any saint, for any subject. The saints are co-members of the Church with us, examples for us to follow, and our brethren. Just as our brothers and sisters, the members of S. Stephen's, pray for each other's needs when asked, the saints stand ready to pray for our needs, too. St. Frances of Rome and St. Fiacre - and all the saints - pray for us!

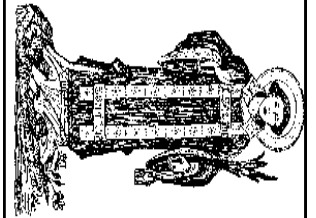


*St. Frances' feast day is observed on March 9, and St. Fiacre's on September 1.*



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