

THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN The Church in Times Square 145 West 46th Street

The Church is open for prayer and services: Sunday, 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM Saturday, 11:00 AM to 5:30 PM

WORSHIP

The Holy Eucharist

On Sunday, Mass is said at 9:00 AM, 10:00 AM, and 5:00 PM. A Solemn Mass is offered at 11:00 AM. From Monday through Friday, Mass is said at 12:15 PM and 6:20 PM. On Saturday, Mass is said at 12:15 PM.

The Daily Office

On Sunday, Morning Prayer is said at 8:30 AM and Evening Prayer at 4:45 PM.

From Monday through Friday, Morning Prayer is said at 8:30 AM, the Noonday Office at 12:00 noon, and Evening Prayer at 6:00 PM. On Saturday, the Noonday Office is said at 12:00 noon and Evening Prayer at 5:00 PM.

The Reconciliation of Penitents

Confessions are heard on Saturdays between 11:30 and 12:00 and between 4:00 and 5:00. Appointments can also be made at other times.

DIRECTORY

The Parish Office is open Monday through Friday, 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM. Telephone 212.869.5830, facsimile 212.869.7039 Worldwide Website: stmvirgin.com

The Parish Clergy and Staff

The Reverend Stephen Gerth, Rector • The Reverend Allen Shin, Curate • The Reverend Thomas Breidenthal, Assistant • Mr. Andrew Adams, Interim Choral Director • Mr. Daniel Fannon, Interim Organist • Mr. John Beddingfield, Rector's Administrative Assistant • Mrs. Eileen Sorensen, Parish Secretary • Mr. Vince Amodei, Bookkeeper • Mr. Steve Gilger, Building Manager • Ms. Mary Haddad and Mr. Richard Lawson, Seminarians

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April 1, 2000

Dear Friends in Christ,

ne Sunday in February I went to brunch after the Solemn Mass with some members of my family and friends of theirs who were in town for the weekend. One of the group who is a member of a different Christian denomination asked me where I had learned to do what he had seen me do that day, preside and preach at a Solemn Mass. My response was something like, "You really learn this as part of a community, not in a classroom."

The conversation moved on but I have been thinking about that response, and I think it was the correct one. By community I certainly meant in part my experience as a student at Nashotah House in the early 1980s, at a time when that seminary was especially strong. From my first visit to Nashotah as a prospective student, the life of prayer in that place invited me to enter a rich and living Christian tradition. I can still recall my arrival there that first evening. I was greeted outside the chapel by a seminarian, vested in cassock and surplice. He had been told I was coming and hoped I would make it before Evensong began, and I did. It was Lent of 1980, twenty years ago. This was in March, and the Nashotah community had been singing Evensong daily since September. I immediately knew this was where I wanted to be. I have been lost in the worship of Christ before and since that day.

I was also thinking of the small parish in the Diocese of Chicago, Saint Helena's Church, Burr Ridge, that sent me to seminary. It was the then rector of Saint Helena's, the Reverend Craig B. Johnson, who asked without prompting from me, "When are you going to do something about your vocation to the priesthood?" I was at Saint Helena's only a relatively short time before Father Johnson was taking me to see Bishop James Montgomery to become a postulant for Holy Orders. The life of that parish community in that era still shapes my life in profound ways.

I remember my first Holy Week at Saint Helena's. The Sunday of the Passion was rich, but I didn't begin to appreciate the full meaning of the week for the parish until the next day, Monday in Holy Week. That evening it didn't surprise me that there were about thirty-five people there, among them many children. Father Johnson had made it pretty clear that the Church expected the faithful to be at Mass every day during Holy Week if at all possible. What I found extraordinary was that I saw in the sacristy service register that there had been another twenty or so at Mass that morning. There were only about 120 communicants in the parish. This pattern of commitment continued through Easter Day. This isn't something that one can learn from reading a manual. One absorbs it by being in an environment where people are committed to a full and ecclesial expression of Christian belief and practice.

MAY - JUNE, 2000

It was some years after ordination, while rereading Aidan Kavanagh's book *The Shape of Baptism*, that I paid attention to the adjective "ecclesial." It's a word for "church" and a good one, because it catches the ear and the eye and describes a reality you and I have entered, especially as Christians in the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

ne can often sense when a person has made a commitment to this expression of Christianity. There is a quiet purposefulness in his or her relationship to the parish community and in his or her personal life of prayer, which finds a fulfillment in worshipping with and serving others through the community. It is when we are members of a particular Christian community, the local manifestation of the Body of Christ, that belief is lived reality.

I write to you as the parish is in the middle of Lent. It will be Easter when this issue of AVE arrives in your mailbox. God willing, we will see the dying and rising of Christ when an adult is baptized at the Great Vigil of Easter. The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold will preside at the liturgy and, on behalf of the Bishop of New York, confirm or receive twelve new members of this parish community. Our experience of Christ will be profoundly ecclesial this Easter, and not just because we will have a Stational Mass* of the Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. It is as brothers and sisters in Christ, as sons and daughters of the Father, that we journey in faith. This community is the Church.

Yours faithfully,

Stephen Centh

* "Stational" is the term now commonly used, in place of the older term "pontifical," to describe a Solemn Mass celebrated by a bishop. The term is drawn from the usage of the early Roman church, where the Bishop of Rome celebrated the eucharist at his cathedral (Saint John Lateran) and then processed through the city making stops (stationes) at the other churches there. A Mass in a cathedral or other church celebrated by a bishop with the participation of the whole parish community and sung with full ritual is described as "the pre-eminent manifestation of the local Church" (The Ceremonial of Bishops, 1989, page 49).

Epiphany Was Rare in Those Days

A sermon preached at the 9 AM Mass on Epiphany II by Richard Lawson, one of our seminarian assistants.

ast Sunday, I said a priest told me that very often he found himself telling people—ordinary people from the parish and people who wandered in to see him, people he knew as the Visible Church and people he knew as outsiders—the priest would often find himself telling them that they were holy, that they lived a life that looked like Jesus' life. He told them this, he said, because they had no idea. They had no idea they were holy because they were humble, or they had no idea because they did not use the same vocabulary as the Church. So this priest would tell them something like this: "I suspect, Melissa, you give of yourself every day for the care and nurture of your children. I do not know if anyone has ever told you this, but you look like Jesus to me; you are a word of God to me."

After reading this week's story from the First Book of Samuel, I suspect that the job is only halfway done when a priest tells a person that he or she is holy; the priest, or any other follower of Jesus or person who worships the Holy, is also called to say that when it comes to the word of God or a vision of holiness, we have heard nothing and we have been given no vision.

As if it is just stating the facts, the narrative of I Samuel tells us: "And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." These are words to be shouted from rooftops and pulpits and street-corners so that we do not ignore the silence of God for the smothering amount of words around us.

One way to read scripture is to recognize that scripture's then is now and now is scripture's then, which is a way to learn scripture that has nothing to do with memorizing Bible verses and everything to do with paying attention to the people and places both in scripture and in our own backyards. This is a way of reading the Bible that keeps us on the edge of our seat because these words— "the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision" mean that there are days now when the word of the Lord is rare and there are days now when we have no vision.

For, unfortunately, this is not just an Old Testament problem. It is easy to assume that when we get to Jesus, who came as flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, the word of God is easier to hear and the vision of holiness is clearer to the eye. The problem with this assumption is that Jesus turned out to be just as unfathomable and often just as silent as the Holy God. When people brought the woman caught in adultery to him and asked if she should be stoned according to the law of Moses, "Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." When his good friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept. While he was nailed to the cross he asked a question—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—that ended in silence. For all that he said in the Gospels, there are staggering silences where Jesus held his tongue.

Ignatius, the third Bishop of Antioch after St. Peter, wrote to the Ephesians, "A man who has truly mastered the utterances of Jesus will also be able to apprehend his silence, and thus reach full spiritual maturity, so that his own words have the force of actions and his silences the significance of speech." Ignatius was martyred not long after he wrote these words.

No matter what religion or system or method one chooses, the silence of God and the silence of Jesus are inescapable, even the silence of those who love us when there is nothing they can say. Chaplains and Christians and good friends often do their best work in hospitals, for example, when they remain a silent presence, because sometimes there is just nothing to be said in the face of what is best described not as the mystery of evil but as everyday life.

There was no frequent vision and Eli's eyesight was getting worse and worse. Samuel was asleep within the temple where the ark of God was, which I imagine is somewhat comparable to sleeping on top of the altar next to the Body and Blood of Christ inside the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin . . . And thank God and Eli and his momma and everyone else who raised that child to listen, because Samuel heard a voice, and after Eli helped him understand that whoever is sleeping in the house with him may not be the only person whose voice he can hear in the middle of the night, Samuel was able to say to the character in this narrative called the Lord, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."

And the voice of the Lord spoke and it was a voice I take to be God's voice because first of all it sounded like God, that is to say it was a voice that told the truth about Eli's family and what they would face in the future, and second of all it was a voice entwined with a people's admission that the word of the Lord was rare in those days, that there was no frequent vision—that is to say, the narrative sounds honest. The silence of the Lord and the invisibility of holiness are as palpable as going hungry. But thank God such a description of Israel and such a description of us is still entwined with stories about Epiphany, stories of the Revelation of God and God's people.

When I was a child, my parents would often drop me off at the public gym in my hometown in the Alabama foothills of the Appalachians, especially during this time of year, when it was too cold to do much of anything outside. I would stay there all afternoon until the gym closed, and usually for an hour or so it would be only me and someone else in the gym, say a mother and her child walking around or shooting a few baskets. And sometimes I would look at a family in the gym or make eye contact with someone whose face appeared to be as worn by time as the ground after a good rain: an old man slowly walking around the gym with his carved wooden cane; a woman holding two kids while they laugh and laugh. During certain moments, I wanted both to give these people something (only I had nothing in my hands) and to receive something from them. I would also think about how these people might look different from me on the outside but on the inside our hearts were made of the same stuff (though I knew not what that stuff was). It was only years later, when I worked full-time at this public facility, that I learned how poor some of these people were in terms of education, money, marketable skills, or whatever else was important in the eyes of the world.

Those moments are as close to an Epiphany as I have ever come, but I have never been able to figure out what in the world they mean and what in the world I am supposed to do in response to them. It's almost as if every waking minute of my life since those moments has been spent trying to live up to them.

The Lord works in mysterious ways... and when we recognize the sound of God's voice and when we keep our eyes pinned to the visions God gives us (which are more often than not haunting pictures of the way the world is rather than the way we wish it looked), then we are able to know the difference between the voice of God and the sound of mere talk, the difference between the silence of God and the noise of boredom.

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The Daily Mass Calendar and Lectionary

It has not been easy in recent years for people in parishes where Mass is offered on weekdays to manage all the service details. In fact, in the last few years Episcopalians have found themselves in a situation very similar to that described by Thomas Cranmer in the preface to the very first Book of Common Prayer in 1549:

Moreover, the number and hardness of the Rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the Book only, was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times, there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out.

For Roman Catholics, one of the great results of Vatican II was the simplification of the Calendar of the Church. For Episcopalians in this country, the opposite has been the case. For any parish community where Morning Prayer, the Holy Eucharist, and Evening Prayer are offered daily, increasing options (increased every three years, at every General Convention) have meant a great deal of work. Yours truly has often reflected, when confronted with the Prayer Book and its many, many associated publications, including in particular The Hymnal 1982, that parish priests from congregations with the full round of daily services are not heavily represented on the committees that make decisions about these books.

The Episcopal Church, like the Church of England, has had a Daily Office lectionary, with appointed psalms and lessons for every day of the year, ever since the Reformation. What the Church has not had is a lectionary for daily Mass. Even with the new Prayer Book and its eucharistic emphasis, no daily Mass lectionary, with particular lessons for every day of the year, was provided. There were options for weekday celebrations but no really satisfactory provisions. In the first parish where I served, we repeated the Sunday lessons at every daily Mass until the following Sunday—the most straightforward of the Prayer Book's options for daily celebrations.

Parishes like Saint Mary's, of course, didn't wait around for the American Church to provide them with a schedule of readings and commemorations for weekdays. We are the heirs of the tradition that produced and supported the publication of the Ordo Kalendar and of different altar missals that provided for weekday celebrations. In fact, the yearly calendar printed specially with our name is still one of these traditional Ordo Kalendars.

Even so, sorting through the optional commemorations and providing the "proper"—that is, the collect, lesson(s), psalm, alleluia/verse, and gospel—for each of these services is too often a complicated and time-consuming exercise. Finally, however, we are able to provide for daily Mass in a more sensible way.

The book commonly known as Lesser Feasts and Fasts (the formal title of the current edition is The Proper for the Lesser Feasts and Fasts 1997 together with The Fixed Holy Days Conforming to the General Convention 1997) has evolved considerably over time. Some years back an edition provided a daily Mass proper for Lent and Easter. Then Advent was added. The last General Convention gave the American Episcopal Church for the first time in its history a daily

Mass lectionary for the rest of the year. It's not perfect, but it works well, and, thanks to computer technology, one can produce materials that are user-friendly for ordinary congregations.

hen the Church of England published its Book of Alternative Services, it adopted the post-Vatican II daily Mass lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church for optional use. Other Anglican churches also have made use of this lectionary. This was essentially the option that was provided finally and officially for the American Church by the General Convention in 1997.

But there is another twist: Since the compilers of the new Prayer Book thought it important for people to have the option of saying either "Here ends the Lesson" or "Here endeth the Lesson" or "Here ends the Reading" or "Here endeth the Reading" or of using the versicle and response "The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God," what happened in practice, when the first lectionaries were printed, was that *no* concluding sentence was printed following the lessons. One could get lost in all the parameters of this discussion, but suffice it to say that the options made it more difficult for people to use the lectionaries with confidence. There are many people who would read willingly and well at weekday and Sunday Mass if it were all laid out in a straightforward way.

Currently at Saint Mary's we are using the weekday Mass option identified in Lesser Feasts as "A Two-Year Weekday Eucharistic Lectionary (Adapted from The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada)." Church Publishing (formerly known as the Church Hymnal Corporation) has not published a lectionary containing these lessons. (The Chapel of Christ the King at the Episcopal Church Center—the national church headquarters on Second Avenue in Manhattan—uses a book published by the Anglican Church of Canada!) Church Publishing has now, however, produced CDs that contain the lectionary material. It is also easy to download passages from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible from <u>www.hti.umich.edu/relig/rev/index.html</u>.

Both the material from the RSV website and the Church Publishing material require a considerable amount of word processing to prepare them for use by the lectors. However, thanks to them one can (and we do) put the lesson together with the appointed psalm (thus eliminating the need for the lector to have a Prayer Book in addition to the lectionary), an alleluia/verse, and the gospel to make it easy for many to serve at weekday Masses. There is still, however, the choice of commemoration.

My own personal bias is for fewer commemorations rather than more. We don't really have the machinery or theology for canonizing saints that our Roman Catholic friends have. Yes, we do commemorate many different individuals for a variety of useful reasons. We too have heroic martyrs, missionaries, and persons of prayer and holiness, and it seems appropriate to remember many of them. However, the collects provided for too many of these commemorations in *Lesser Feasts* are an opportunity more for instruction than for prayer. (They give a history lesson, in other words.) Some of them are simply not well done. There are, of course, saints and commemorations from the greater Catholic tradition that we would not miss—lesser commemorations like the Nativity of Mary on September 8, and great feasts like our patronal feast, the Immaculate Conception, on December 8.

So: on ordinary weekdays—days when there is no commemoration—one simply repeats the Sunday collect and uses the authorized two-year weekday Mass lectionary. The Sunday collects, like the collects for principal and major feasts, are already in the Altar Book. But "lesser feasts" and here we go again with the options—can be observed by using the collect from *Lesser Feasts* as the collect of the day, as a collect to conclude the prayers of the people, or simply as a remembrance within the prayers of the people. One can then use either the lessons set out for the ordinary weekday or (if you are still following this) the particular lessons appointed for the lesser feast.

Beyond these kinds of details, there are significant ministry issues here. The layout of our Prayer Book and Hymnal make it very hard for newcomers to participate. Evangelism just wasn't a central issue for those who made certain decisions about these publications. Another issue: The Hymnal is really designed in too many aspects for "choral" services, not "liturgical" services—that is, services where the congregation sings the liturgy and the choir may or may not assist it. Too many Episcopalians still experience the liturgy as something they follow and participate in by reading along, and our books encourage them to do just that. In the catholic tradition the assembly actively offers worship by hearing, saying, and doing as a community and not by reading along and listening as individuals.

I believe the Episcopal Church's life is enriched by a straightforward provision for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist every day of the year. I think it is wise to err on the side of simplicity and user-friendliness when setting out and planning the celebration of the Church year. I wish we didn't have to do so much of this in the local parish; but I am thankful that we can.

-Stephen Gerth

In Celebration

A year ago at St. Mary's, the Feast of the Annunciation was the occasion for celebrating the taking up of a ministry: the Reverend Stephen Gerth was instituted as Ninth Rector of this parish by the Right Reverend Richard F. Grein, the Bishop of New York. This year, the same feast was the occasion for celebrating the handing over of a ministry. On the evening of March 24, Mr. George Blackshire, who had headed the Brother Laurence Guild (hospitality) since 1980, formally stepped down. In the presence of the Right Reverend E. Don Taylor, the Vicar Bishop for New York City, who had been celebrant and preacher at the vigil Mass, George was fêted with praise and cake by the parish community, including Jim Dennis, who has been organizing our evening receptions for some time and who now heads the Guild; Ann Sokolowski, who organizes the Sunday coffee hour; and Rosanne Valeri and Rosanne Talbird, who assisted George in the last two years of his ministry.

—Linda Bridges



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The Feast of the Annunciation, 2000

Saint Mary's was honored to have the Right Reverend E. Don Taylor, Vicar Bishop for New York City, as celebrant and preacher at the Solemn Mass on the Eve of the Annunciation, March 24, 2000.



Bishop Taylor censes the high altar during the singing of the Gloria in excelsis Deo.



Photos by Alice V. Manning

Saint Mary's Curate, serving as Deacon of the Mass, the Reverend Allen Shin, precedes Bishop Taylor on the way to the pulpit.



Bishop Taylor preached a moving sermon to the large congregation.

The Bishop intones a solemn pontifical blessing at the conclusion of the Mass.



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THE CALENDAR FOR MAY 2000

1 M 2 Tu 3 W 4 Th 5 F 6 Sa	SAINT PHILIP & SAINT JAMES, APOSTLES SAINT MARK THE EVANGELIST (transferred) Easter Weekday Monnica, <i>mother of Augustine of Hippo</i> Easter Weekday Monthly Requiem	No abstinence
7 SU 8 M 9 Tu 10 W 11 Th 12 F 13 Sa	THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (MARIAN MAY) Julian of Norwich, <i>mystic</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>bishop</i> Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Of Our Lady	Festival) No abstinence
14 SU 15 M 16 Tu 17 W 18 Th 19 F 20 Sa	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Dunstan, archbishop Alcuin, deacon and abbot	No abstinence
21 SU 22 M 23 Tu 24 W 25 Th 26 F 27 Sa	THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Jackson Kemper, <i>missionary bishop</i> The Venerable Bede, <i>priest and monk</i> Augustine of Canterbury, <i>archbishop</i> Of Our Lady	No abstinence
28 SU 29 M 30 Tu 31 W	The Sixth Sunday of Easter Rogation Day Rogation Day Eve of the Visitation 6:00 PM The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	

THE CALENDAR FOR JUNE 2000

1 Тн	ASCENSION DAY Procession and Solemn Mass 6:00 PM The Right Reverend Mark S. Sisk, Bishop Coadjutor for the Diocese of New Ye	ork, Celebrant & Preacher
2 F 3 Sa	Martyrs of Lyons Monthly Requiem; Martyrs of Uganda	No abstinence
4 SU 5 M 6 Tu 7 W 8 Th 9 F 10 Sa	THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER Boniface, <i>archbishop and martyr</i> Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Easter Weekday Columba, <i>abbot</i> Ephrem, <i>deacon</i>	No abstinence
11 SU 12 M 13 Tu 14 W 15 Th 16 F 17 Sa	THE DAY OF PENTECOST Procession & Solemn Mass 11:00 AM The Reverend Canon Carl Gerdau, Canon to the Presiding Bishop, Preacher SAINT BARNABAS THE APOSTLE (transferred) Easter Weekday Ember Day (Basil the Great, bishop) Evelyn Underhill, mystic Ember Day (Joseph Butler, bishop) Ember Day	Abstinence
18 SU 19 M 20 Tu 21 W 22 Th 23 F 24 SA	TRINITY SUNDAY Weekday Weekday Alban, <i>martyr</i> Weekday Eve of St. John's Day 6:00 PM NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST	Abstinence
25 SU 26 M 27 Tu 28 W	SOLEMNITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI Solemn Mass, Eucharistic Procession throug & Benediction 11:00 AM First Book of Common Prayer Weekday Irenaeus, <i>bishop</i>	h Times Square,
29 Тн 30 F	Eve of Saint Peter & Saint Paul 6:00 PM SAINT PETER & SAINT PAUL, APOSTLES SACRED HEART OF JESUS	Abstinence