Midweek Update #16, July 8th, 2020

Greetings in Christ almost halfway through a summer that hasn’t really felt like one so far, but here’s hoping! I’m glad to be sharing this update with you and I hope it finds you in a pleasant place.

This week, the Anglican church celebrates the virtues of St. Thomas More and Benedict of Nursia. The first of these might seem odd for historically minded Anglicans because of course More was killed by Henry VIII after he refused to publicly support Henry in his bid to break from Rome, choosing to remain loyal to the Pope. But such is the way of Anglicans. We’ve come to understand that people who follow their conscience in the way of Christ often reflect his character far more than those who had the most power in shaping the Anglican way. In this case Henry VIII would never be considered a saint, he was in many ways a megalomaniac driven by his instincts of self-preservation and self-regard.

More was the model of the renaissance Christian, a scholar and tolerant and encouraging of new learning while maintaining a deep spiritual connection to God through prayer. I marvel at his calm before his death; as he said to his daughter when she visited him in prison “God’s grace hath strengthened me hitherto and made me content in my heart to lose goods, land, and life too, rather than to swear against my conscience.” And as he stood on the scaffold More said: “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first.”

Benedict of Nursia is the father of almost all those ways of life that have come to known in the great tradition as the way of “the religious life,” which is to say, the way of life practiced in monasteries and convents. His life, fostered in a cave where he sought to perfect imitation of Christ finally yielded to a life in which he led thousands into a renewed spirituality at Monte Cassino in Italy. When he died in 547, he had, unknowingly laid the agenda for the church through the dark ages. Indeed, ironically from our point of view, Monasteries were often the economic engine after the collapse of the Roman empire.

In our time, Archbishop Melissa has advocated that parishes embrace a “Benedictine life” that is a spirituality in which each of us seek in our own way to apply the vow of stability, to commit to our particular community, to these people and this place as a way to God. That we seek to understand the vow of obedience as a lifelong process of learning, listening to the Holy Spirit through God’s Word and through the leaders God has given us. And to incorporate a vow of conversion; a conversion of life in which we never stop turning to Christ.

Speaking of commitment to our community, the nominations committee is actively seeking nominations for a new Bishop for this diocese. If you would like to nominate someone the details of how to do that can be found on the diocesan website https://bit.ly/3iEqkgR You will need to round up two clergy and two lay members of synod. Please pray for this process in the diocese. We need the Holy Spirit’s help in choosing our next leader for indeed the challenges and opportunities are great!

**What does our ordination liturgy tell us?**

It is the ministry of a bishop to continue the apostolic work of leading, supervising and uniting the Church. In undertaking this ministry a bishop is expected

* to proclaim Christ's resurrection,
* to interpret the Gospel and
* to testify to the sovereignty of God.

 Within the Diocese a bishop has a particular responsibility

* to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church,
* to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the sacraments,
* to ordain priests and deacons,
* to join in the ordination of other bishops and
* to be, in all things, a faithful pastor and wholesome example to all Christians.

When a bishop is ordained, they promise

* to proclaim and interpret the Gospel boldly,
* to encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries,
* to work collaborately and consultatively with the lay and ordained leaders of the Church and
* to be merciful to all by showing compassion to the poor and strangers and by defending those who have no helper.

**What do our Diocesan Priorities tell us?**

Our Diocesan Priorities tell us that we are seeking a bishop

* who is dedicated to building positive, collaborative relationships with clergy, parish leaders, congregations and the wider community;
* who is committed to the health, well-being and growth of parishes and worshipping communities;
* who is able to equip and support parish leaders, lay and ordained, as they develop their own skills and the skills of their congregations;
* who has a heart for justice and is willing to take risks, as Jesus did, on behalf of those outside the halls of power;
* who has a high level of intercultural competency, is able to interact with and respond to people of varying cultural and theological backgrounds;
* who is willing to equip parish leaders, lay and ordained, to be interculturally competent, and
* who is prudent, generous and able to equip parish leaders to imagine creatively how resources can be developed and deployed.

We had a practice gathering at St. Matthew last week, 18 of us were there and the process of gathering in a safe and socially distanced way went smoothly. This Sunday we’re hoping to reprise that event and have a practice gathering at St. Thomas. If you’ve not already let myself, our someone know that you’re planning to come please know that you are welcome, please connect with People’s Warden Jan Guretzki ([jangrr@hotmail.com](mailto:jangrr@hotmail.com)) she’s organizing the practicalities. If you’re coming please bring your own mask though if you’re not able to find one there will be some on offer so don’t let that stop you. The practice gathering will consist of some of the Virtual Church service of Home Prayers but it will not replace that online service which will continue to be our main form of worship service until Phase III when we hope to offer Eucharistic worship. After the practice service we will have a time a Q&A followed by a socially distanced visiting time outside. For those of you used to coming to St. Thomas at 9 am, this practice gathering will not be at that time, it will be at 11 am, so mark that.

My Rector’s Warden at St. Thomas, Jennifer Gagne has decided to resign that position and her position on Council. Jennifer has been a wonderful support to me and to our parish in many areas and she will continue to be a part of the Groundworks group and a group we’re calling “New Connections” which is made up of folks in both parishes as we explore Christian Formation both online and, hopefully someday, in-person. Thanks Jennifer!

Thanks for your ongoing support of St. Thomas and St. Matthew and for your communication. Please know that I am praying for you and wish we could be together. Indeed today marks exactly 4 months since we last celebrated Eucharist together. I pray you are learning along with me as we walk through one of the most interesting books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Ecclesiastes but I understand the sentiment that we’re not together sharing our most powerful form of spiritual sustenance, Holy Eucharist. Soon my friends…hopefully!

I leave you with some of the beautiful flowers from the Memorial gardens at St. Matthew! Thanks to all who are taking care of our buildings and grounds during this time!



