

# The Parish Paper

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

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The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

July 24, 2016

## TURNING TO THE LORD

There was a flap in the Roman Catholic Church recently, over the priest's stance in prayer at the altar during Mass – whether it should be “facing the altar” (*ad orientem*), the custom of many centuries but now rare; or “facing the people” (*ad populum*), a custom introduced in the 1960's and now widespread. Robert Cardinal Sarah, the redoubtable Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments appointed by Pope Francis, caused consternation in some quarters when he encouraged the restoration of the ancient custom. A small matter, perhaps, yet not without significance, for it speaks to us of the very nature of Christian worship itself.

There is a story told by the late Avery Cardinal Dulles that illustrates the point at issue. He was preaching at a church where there was a huge banner that said “God is other people”. He said he wanted to take an enormous magic marker, and put a comma after the word “other”. “God is *Other*, people!”

There are all kinds of ways people may gather for prayer, and there is a long tradition (in monasteries, college chapels, chancel choirs, and even the congregational seating of some parish churches before the 19<sup>th</sup> c.) of the congregation's being divided into two groups, each facing the other across a

wide central passage. That's not at issue. Nor is there a controversy about the priest's facing the people when he is addressing them from the altar. The question is what direction the priest *at the altar* should face when he is addressing God, in prayer or praise. When the priest faces the altar, he is (at least notionally) facing east – *ad orientem*, which literally means ‘in the direction of the rising sun’. It is a sign of the fundamental orientation of Eucharistic worship. In the Lord's Supper, we “do show the Lord's death until he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26); in the memorial of his death we look for his coming again in glory, we look toward the dawning of the new day of salvation. That's why, even when the pews do not face east, we all turn to the altar for the Creed or Gloria. To face east symbolizes our conversion to Christ, which is literally, *conversio ad Dominum*, ‘turning to the Lord’.

St. John's (like other churches built in the last two centuries) was not built with its altar at the geographical east, but the enormous image of the risen Lord reigning from his cross makes the same symbolic point. If we are not facing the geographical east, we are facing what one might call liturgical east. The meaning is the same. We know that the health and salvation we desperately need is not found in ourselves, but in Christ, and in his coming to us in the grace of his cross

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**STANDING NOTICES**

The occasional Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance, Communion and Unction of the Sick, and the Office of Burial of the Dead are always available by appointment, at announced times, or as necessary. Please call the Church Office to notify the clergy if you or a loved one is in the hospital.

**VESTRY OFFERING CHAIRMEN**

8:00 Mr. Arthur D. Weed  
10:30 Mrs. Morgan W. Murray

**Usher Chairman**  
Mr. John D. Riley

**ALTAR FLOWERS**

The flowers at the altar this Sunday are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Lorton S. Livingston by their family.

**CHANCEL SOCIETY**

Mrs. John G. Bradshaw, Jr., Mrs. Jayne G. Holland,  
Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Mrs. T. Herbert Guerry III,  
Mrs. Richard C. E. Jennings,  
Mrs. Jeanne W. McMillan, Miss Caroline McMillan,  
Mrs. Joseph R. Ross, Mrs. William C. Rodgers

**ACOLYTES**

8:30 a.m. Jamie McClellan  
10:30 a.m. Turner Stevens    Hawkins Pindar  
                                         Jackson McClellan    Hunt Wasden

**COFFEE HOUR CHAIRMAN**

Mrs. David A. Reid

**SUNDAY 9:30 A.M. ADULT CLASS**

READING ROOM: The Book of Samuel  
with Father Dunbar

**MEN'S WEEKDAY STUDY & DISCUSSION**

Tuesday- Men's Breakfast  
6:45 a.m., Parish House  
Thursday- *Romans* with Father Dunbar  
7:00 a.m., CH Reading Room

**WOMEN'S WEEKDAY STUDY & DISCUSSION**

Wednesday- C. S. Lewis Women's Fellowship  
July 27, 11:00 a.m. Reading Room

**THE SAINT MICHAEL'S CONFERENCE**

From July 31-August 6, Father O'Brien and five of our young people will take part in the Saint Michael's Conference at the Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford, Connecticut.

Saint Michael's, a conference in the Anglican tradition is a ministry that has since 1960 sought to "guide young people in their journey of understanding and embracing faith in Christ". Father O'Brien has been on the faculty for seven years with eleven conferees (ages 14-21) having taken part.

Thank you to the Women of St. John's for providing the conference tuition for each of our participants.

Visit [www.saintmichaelsconference.com](http://www.saintmichaelsconference.com) to see more about this ministry, especially the video testimonials tab, "Day In The Life of SMC".

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

and resurrection, a coming which is made present to us after a heavenly and spiritual manner in the Sacrament of the Altar.

When we face one another across the altar, the meaning is very different. As Cardinal Dulles' story suggests, its implication is that God is to be found within the gathered human community, and even that he is somehow identical with it. It's saying that everything we need is generated from ourselves. In this view, the language of God and Christ is really just coded and symbolic language for the gathered community. And if the symbolic language says that "Christ is the way", that means that "we are the way". (This was literally what was said by a former primate of All Canada in a sermon for the Feast of the Ascension, at All Saints Cathedral in Halifax. It was a moment of startling clarity not repeated.) That's not as uncommon as one might think. Every time someone refers to "my faith in humanity"; every time some journalist invokes the tired clichés of the "indomitable human spirit", that's what they are saying. We find it very easy to confuse God with ourselves.

One further point. It is sometimes argued that "facing the people" conforms to the posture of Jesus at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharist. (Of course, to be consistent, all priests and people would have to recline in order to celebrate the Eucharist, as this is how Jesus and his disciples shared in the Last Supper.) Yet as far as we know about ancient practice, the host did *not* face his guests across a table, or in a closed circle. The tables were set up in a U-shape, with the host at the base, facing

the open side of the U, and the guests along the outer sides, but no one on the inside of the table – leaving space for the servers to come and go. Even for the Son of God the Eucharistic memorial of his death was instituted in openness to the coming Kingdom.

Facing the altar is sometimes pilloried as "the priest turning his back on the people". One could say, in rejoinder, that "facing the people" amounts to "turning your back on Christ". That might not be the intention of many who take this posture, but the symbolic meaning is there. And if we are going to have symbols (which of course, are inescapable), then let's get them right. Let's not turn our backs on the Lord. GGD

#### **PARISH KALENDAR THIS WEEK**

##### **Monday July 25**

##### **ST. JAMES THE GREAT, APOSTLE**

8:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

*Morning and Evening Prayer  
with Holy Communion*

##### **Tuesday to Friday**

8:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

*Morning and Evening Prayer*

##### **In addition, on Wednesday**

9:45 a.m. *The Litany*

10:00 a.m. *Holy Eucharist*

#### **JANE'S CANNERS**

...are at work 9:30 a.m. each Wednesday. All are welcome to join them! Donations needed: half-pint jars, sugar, bell peppers, pears, apples, pecans, onions, etc. Call Jane Pressly at 912-233-6551.

#### **SAVANNAH VOICE FESTIVAL**

St. John's Church will host three concerts for the upcoming festival on August 11, 12, & 19. All tickets are available at [savannahvoicefestival.org](http://savannahvoicefestival.org).

**8:00 A.M.—HOLY COMMUNION**

COLLECT, EPISTLE, and GOSPEL..... Prayer Book, page 200  
*A continental breakfast is available in Cranmer Hall following this service.*

**9:30 A.M.-10:15 A.M. - CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR ADULTS (Cranmer Hall)**

10:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (Noon) - **Nursery (Cranmer Hall)**

**10:30 A.M. - JOYFUL NOISE, JOYFUL HEARTS (Cranmer Hall)**

*Music, Teaching, and Active Fun for Pre-School through Kindergarten.*

**10:30 A.M.— SUNG EUCHARIST & ADDRESS**

HYMN: #344 *O Love How Deep*..... Deus Tuorum Militum

**ANTE-COMMUNION**

Collect for Purity..... Prayer Book, p. 67

Summary of the Law ..... 69

KYRIE ELEISON: #710 ..... Healey Willan

Collect and Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:1..... 200, 201

HYMN: #564 *How Firm a Foundation* ..... Lyons

The Holy Gospel: St. Luke 15:11..... 201

The Nicene Creed ..... 71

HYMN: #567 *Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us*..... Dulce Carmen

*Children may exit following the cross for PSALM PSINGERS (Grades 1-5).*

SERMON..... Father Dunbar

**OFFERTORY**

Sentences

Anthem: *I Love All Graceful Things*..... Eric H. Thiman

Katharine D. Warner, Soloist

Presentation of Alms #139

Prayer for the State of the Church ..... 74

**THE HOLY COMMUNION**

Invitation, Confession and Absolution..... 75

Sursum Corda #734 ..... 76

SANCTUS and BENEDICTUS #711..... Healey Willan

Prayer of Consecration: Institution, Oblation, Invocation..... 80

The Lord's Prayer and Prayer of Humble Access (*said with the congregation*) ..... 82

AGNUS DEI #712 ..... Healey Willan

HYMN: #191 *Thou, Who at Thy First Eucharist Didst Pray* ..... Song 1 (Tune #470)

Motet: *Lead Me, Lord*..... S. S. Wesley

Thanksgiving (*said with the congregation*) ..... 83

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS #739 ..... Old Scottish Chant

The Blessing (*kneeling*)..... 84

HYMN: #562 *Stand up, Stand up, for Jesus* ..... Webb

VOLUNTARY: *Concerto II in A Minor (BWV593, after Vivaldi)*..... J. S. Bach

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*Everyone is invited to attend Coffee Hour in the Parish House immediately after the 10:30 a.m. service.  
 If you are a guest and visiting our Parish, please make yourself known.*

**12:00 p.m. (Noon) HOLY COMMUNION in the Chapel (Collect, Epistle, Gospel as at 8:00 a.m.)**