

## *Sr. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Lake Worth, Florida*



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South Florida



### UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

A monthly forum on the third *Saturday* of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 P.M. following Evening Prayer at 6

Forums with Dr. Richard T. Nolan

*Retired Honorary Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Hartford, and Retired Philosophy & Religion Professor, and Writer*

*Editor of [www.philosophy-religion.org](http://www.philosophy-religion.org)*

Saturday, Sept. 17, 2005

*Tonight's Topic -*

### “UNFAMILAR OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN THE PRAYER BOOK”

#### *A Prayer To Be Said In Unison*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who has committed to your holy Church the care and nurture of all the faithful; Enlighten with your wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### LITURGY

Liturgy is from the Greek *leitourgia* ("the work of the people") - and has evolved with three meanings: the public worship of the church, a particular order of worship, or the Eucharist itself. In its most comprehensive sense, a church's liturgy is the body of its rituals and ceremonials. According to Dearmer, ritual refers to "what is said or sung in a church service, prayers, lections, versicles, and responses. A book of ritual is a written or printed work containing forms of service issues by proper authority, and known as rites. A book of ritual may well contain in its rubrics ceremonial directions as to what is to be done or used during the service. The collection of alms, the wearing of special vesture, the offering of bread and wine are ceremonies. Thus ritual and ceremonial are frequently interwoven. ... It is not 'ritual' to which the English mind raises objections, but ceremonial, and particularly ceremonial that is fussy and meaningless." (*The Parson's Handbook*, rev. ed. by Pocknee, p. 1)

However, like other artistic expressions, pleasing and purposeful ceremonial is quite subjective and "in the eye of the beholder." In some region of the country Episcopalians are fortunate to be able to choose from congregations united in liturgy by The Book of Common Prayer, but whose ceremonial customs vary from simple to elaborate. Unfortunately there are other regions which offer one style, thereby depriving people of the richness inherent in Anglican worship.

## BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

The first Book of Common Prayer for the Church of England came into use on Pentecost, 1549. The Episcopal Church celebrates that historical event on the first weekday after Pentecost. This first prayer book in the English language was prepared primarily by the gifted Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer. Continually evolving Church of England prayer books were issued in 1552, 1559, 1604, 1662, and several trial-use liturgies since the mid-1960s. After the American Revolution, new versions were provided for the Episcopal Church in the United States in 1789 (omitting oaths of loyalty to the King!), then in 1892, 1928, and 1979.

The "Ratification" and "Preface" to the first American Book of Common Prayer may be found on pages 8 and 9 of our current (1979) Book of Common Prayer. Although there is constant study of our forms of worship by the Standing Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church, a date for any new revision has not been established. The transitions to new versions are always unsettling for many people, including clergy.

### FUNCTION OF PRAYER BOOK

"This is how the Book of Common Prayer functions for Anglicans: we interpret and understand the Bible and the doctrinal and moral tradition of the church through the way we worship and pray together as a community of the baptized. So, when we say, 'If you want to know what we Episcopalians believe, come and worship with us,' we are saying that our way of worshiping expresses our way of believing." [Griffiss, *The Anglican Vision* (1997), p. 109] Dr. Griffiss also acknowledges that our worship provides a degree of latitude and some ambiguity in matters of belief, but nonetheless a credible context for the Anglican community to discern the Christian experience, past and present.

### RUBRICS AND LENGTH OF SERVICES

Rubrics (from the Latin *rubrica*: red) are Prayer Book directions for the conduct of services. In some Prayer Book editions (e.g., altar prayer books) the rubrics are printed in red. Rubrics originated with Roman jurists who used red for the titles under which they listed their laws and eventually the laws themselves.

"Rubrical directions in the Prayer Book are generally of three kinds. 1. Normative rubrics ... are generally in the present indicative: 'is, reads, stand, sit, kneel.' Others use words or phrases, such as 'shall, is directed, is required' or a form of 'be' with the infinitive. 2. Rubrics which recommend a certain action generally use words or phrases as 'it is customary....' 3. Permissive rubrics are usually indicated by the word 'may.' They indicate options without making a requirement or recommendation." [from Stuhlman, *Prayer Book Rubrics Expanded* (1987), p. viii.]

Editorial Note: Three Scripture readings plus a psalm are *not required* at celebrations of the Eucharist! The inordinate length of many contemporary Services has occurred, apparently because of a "more is better" notion embedded in the minds of many clergy. One might ask whose needs are being met with such lengthy Services – needs of the clergy or of those they are called upon to serve and lead!

### PROPER

The use of the word "Propers" (from the Latin *propria*, belonging to), as in "the Propers of the day," include the appointed Collect, Psalm, Readings from the Bible, and Proper Preface (the words that usually precede the Sanctus "Holy, Holy, Holy...." in the Eucharist). Propers vary according to the day or season of the church year. In the Book of Common Prayer please see "Concerning the Proper of the Church Year" (p. 158), "The Lectionary" (pp. 890ff.) and "Proper Prefaces" (pp. 344ff. and 377ff). The use of Propers began in the very early years of Christian worship.

### A RIGHT TO RECEIVE COMMUNION?

Although we may think that our admittance to Holy Communion is a "right," a priest has the responsibility and authority to refuse Communion to a person who is "living a notoriously evil life" until that person has "given clear proof of repentance and amendment of life." A priest may also refuse Communion to persons who have "done wrong to their neighbors and are a scandal to other members of the congregation" or when there is "hatred between members of the congregation." Please read the Disciplinary Rubrics on page 409 of the current Prayer Book! The

rationale for these rubrics can be traced to the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 5:21ff.) and the 1549 Prayer Book. Their equivalents appear on pages 84f. of the 1928 Prayer Book.

## OBLATION

Oblation (from the Latin *oblatus*: offering) now refers more specifically to the people's gifts of bread and wine to be consecrated as the Eucharistic Sacrament. A familiar offertory sentence provided for Eucharistic liturgies "Let us with gladness present the offerings and oblations of our life and labor to the Lord" may be paraphrased "Let us joyfully offer money, bread and wine - symbolic of our existence and responsibilities - to the Lord."

## AMEN!

"Amen" (pronounced "Ah-men" by Episcopalians) is a Hebrew word meaning "so be it." From the time of Moses "Amen" was a sign of acceptance or ratification of laws or regulations; it evolved as a way of concluding prayers in the synagogue. When *Amen* is printed in italics in the Book of Common Prayer, it is to be said with enthusiasm by the congregation; otherwise, with vigor by both minister and people. At the conclusion of each of the Eucharistic prayers (I and II in Rite One, and A,B,C and D in Rite Two) the word is written with upper-case letters, AMEN, to give particular emphasis to the role of the congregation in ratifying this central prayer of consecration.

## FASTING

"Fast" is derived from the Old English *faestan* - to observe, to fast) According to the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* fasting is "abstinence from food for a length of time. A common ascetic practice, it is also a widespread mode of purification with respect to ritual activities or the restoration of health. ... Partial or total abstinence from food and drink was institutionalized in early Christianity for certain days." Fasting was taken for granted by Christ. It is mentioned in the Book of Common Prayer on pages 13 and 17, but not referred to in the Prayer Book "Catechism" (pp. 845ff.) In the Anglican Communion, fasting is encouraged when it benefits the spiritual life of an individual. Both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are considered Fast days in the church calendar. (Some Anglicans believe that modern day fasting is pretentious piety.)

## HOMILY

The preaching of a sermon following the reading of Scripture originates in synagogue worship. "Homily" (from the Greek *homilia*, discourse) and "sermon" (from the Latin *sermo*, talk) are synonyms. Unofficially, "homily" is often used to mean a "short sermon." Such homilies are sometimes provided at certain special occasions (such as weddings) or when there are time constraints because of the scheduling of Services. "The Sermon" is listed as an integral part of Eucharistic worship (see Prayer Book pages 326 and 358), but not for Morning or Evening Prayer.

## PRIVACY AND PUBLIC PRAYER by Martin E. Marty

While focusing on "public religion" and "religion in public" zones, "Sightings" necessarily pays attention to the public/private distinction in religion and obsessively concerns itself with guarding that which is and should be private. So we paid close attention to a newly recognized zone of possible violation: prayer in public worship.

In the Dallas Morning News (July 22, 2000), Susan Hogan/Albach writes about how "Public petitions for the sick become a legal concern." Meaning: that some people have illnesses they do not want disclosed in worship, and a few have taken to suing -- what else? -- where there have been unwitting disclosures. News of some illnesses can embarrass, while news of others can compromise careers. And more.

Computer technology -- again, what else? -- is among the villains: "With computer technology making it possible to share data more easily than ever before, Americans' concern about protecting their privacy, especially medical records, has made it a pressing legal and social matter."

Some years ago theologian and ethicist William May, also of Dallas, wrote about the publicness of prayer-for-others in worship. In such prayer the needs of congregation members are lifted up, the often invisible (the homeless, for example) are made visible, and congregants are to remember and pray for enemies. May made good points.

Those of us who have moonlighted as pastors or have been with fellow-believing friends when they are ill know how meaningful and powerful is the knowledge that others are praying for them. One would hate to see this power diminished, the bases for awareness lost. Yet there are also some legitimate legal, ethical, and moral considerations, as Hogan/Albach points out.

Kathy Kunes, we read, typically fields sick calls at a Dallas-area Catholic parish. "Many times people want the priest to know what's wrong, but they just don't want it being made public," she relates. Usually, that's when it's something like prostate cancer, breast cancer, a stillborn birth, or drug problems. It's very painful."

No doubt privacy has sometimes been violated, however unintentionally: the well-meant blurting out of names and conditions during intercessory prayer, or some printed names and illnesses described in worship bulletins or congregational newsletters. But to entirely stop remembering others in need, through public prayer, would be devastating. \*Sightings\* does not dispense advice but only observes. We observe that those responsible are taking greater care on this front -- but they keep on caring. They make inquiries to guard privacy and, with permission, name names and say healing and helpful public prayers as well.

#### LAWSUITS FOR PRAYER LISTS? THE ETHICS OF INTERCESSION By The Very Rev. Gabe Sinisi, M.D.

"A Privacy Act that took effect December 21, 2002, in Australia restricts churches from placing names on prayer lists in bulletins unless they are given specific permission..." - ENS, Jan. 8. 2003

OK, so physicians have been dealing with malpractice lawsuits for quite some time. Frivolous suits, the occasional unscrupulous lawyer, and insurance premiums are just part of the cost of doing business for many professionals and others serving the public in our society.

But now clergy, and church groups who practice intercessory prayer, better watch out. At least in Australia a new law prohibits the publishing of a person's name on a prayer list without their express permission. It is considered an invasion of privacy.

What about here in the good old U.S. of A.? There may not be a law but we Americans are known to be a litigious bunch. Picture kindly Mother Victoria - moved by compassion, during the main Sunday morning Mass she announces that dear old Bill needs prayers for an uncomplicated course of healing after his hemorrhoid surgery tomorrow morning. When Bill gets over being overwhelmed by gifts from the congregation (including Tucks pads and donut pillows), will he be able to call his attorney and institute invasion of privacy proceedings against everyone he knows at church?

I don't know. I'm not a lawyer. But I do know that we all have a moral and ethical responsibility to protect each other's privacy. Maybe, unlike Australia, it isn't against the law here - yet. And maybe under most circumstances even some of the most jaded lawyers and judges might find it distasteful to sue people who are actually praying for you. It still seems like a good idea to ask a person if they would like to be prayed for publicly in church.

By the way, there is generally no need to expose a person's detailed medical history on a prayer list. Generalities like "for healing" do very well unless an individual requests that their specific need be mentioned. It never hurts to ask people what their wants are before doing it "the way we've always done it."

For me the bottom (no pun relating to my earlier example is intended here) line in this and in all dealings with our brothers and sisters in Christ is to do what is right. Consideration and sensitivity for the persons - and their families - who are the focus of our ministry should always be hallmarks of a Christian community anyway.

Dean Gabe Sinisi is rector of St. Christopher's-by-the-Sea, Key Biscayne, and dean of the South Dade Deanery. He is also a medical doctor, who practiced internal medicine for 20 years before being called to the priesthood.

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"..... mindful of confidentiality, permission must be given by the individual prayed for to use his or her name in the public prayer of the Church." - from "Prayer Lists" in "The Grapevine" (monthly newsletter of Christ Church Cathedral, Hartford, CT) [September 2004, p. 3]

#### PASSING THE PEACE

After studying the matter, no one would doubt the historical and theological bases of passing the peace at some point during the Celebration of the Eucharist. Moreover, there is ceremonial latitude in the way that this is done.

However, the raucous ways that this sacred moment is implemented in many (most?) congregations resemble a reckless circus rather than a holy greeting. The community spirit of awesome worship, prayer and reverence is crucified recklessly on an altar of Woodstock theater as clergy may easily be heard to remark: "Nice hat, Gloria!" "Hey, good to see ya; quite a game last night!" Nowhere among liturgical precedents will one find the intention of clergy prancing up and down aisles with vestments flapping like butterflies in heat or some extraverted congregants leaping at others merely enduring the assaults. No one anticipated that a diocesan bishop would have to reprimand a priest for being too amorous!

The Eucharist: a banquet, a celebration, holy worship of a faithful community - but neither a beer party in someone's back yard nor a moment in group therapy!

ZENIT - The World Seen From Rome Date: 2003-10-28 CAN PRIEST GO DOWN AISLE AT THE KISS OF PEACE?

ROME, OCT. 28, 2003 (Zenit.org).- Answered by Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical Athenaeum.

**Q:** Is it OK for the priest to come down during the peace offering to shake hands with the congregation? I hear this is wrong and I'd really like to know if it is or not since it makes me uneasy about our doing something inappropriate. -- I.S., San Ysidro, California

**A:** The new General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM), with approved adaptations for the United States, refers to this question in No. 154: "The priest may give the sign of peace to the ministers but always remains within the sanctuary, so as not to disturb the celebration. In the dioceses of the United States of America, for a good reason, on special occasions (for example, in the case of a funeral, a wedding, or when civic leaders are present) the priest may offer the sign of peace to a few of the faithful near the sanctuary. At the same time, in accord with the decisions of the Conference of Bishops, all offer one another a sign that expresses peace."

For the moment the above exceptions, which are quite reasonable, apply only within the United States as almost no other episcopal conference has submitted a translation for the Holy See's approval.

The reason the GIRM dwells on this point is to put the kiss of peace into its proper context as a brief, and relatively unimportant rite in preparation for Communion; in fact, few realize that it is actually optional. It is the forthcoming Communion, not the priest, nor the good feelings we harbor toward our neighbors, that is the reason and source of the peace we desire for our fellows and the peace we receive from them. As GIRM 82 says, in the Rite of Peace: "the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament."

So, when the celebrant walks down the aisle shaking hands, the gesture, despite his good intentions, tends to inordinately draw attention to his person, as if he, and not the Lord, were the source of the peace that only Christ can give. Sometimes we priests can forget that being a "*Pontifex*" means being a bridge, and a bridge serves its purpose only when we walk over it, not when we admire it from a distance.

The gestures of the faithful, while respecting local custom, they should avoid excess exuberance and ebullience, again according to GIRM 82: "as to the sign of peace to be given, the manner is to be established by Conferences of Bishops in accordance with the culture and customs of the peoples. It is, however, appropriate that each person offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner."

At the same time when this rite is done well it can be very effective spiritually. Dr. Bernard Nathanson, for example, has written of the powerful impression caused by witnessing this gesture at a Catholic Mass as he struggled to leave behind radical atheism and find, first belief in God, and eventually, acceptance of the Catholic faith.

email from a priest

Hi,

I was trained that the peace should not "descend down to the people from up on high" - Tom Talley. This was a reaction to the Middle Ages when the peace, which had its origins in the earliest church, like so many other aspects of the liturgy, became corrupted and clericalized. According to Marion Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (The Seabury Press: New York, 1980, pp. 345-346), "In various cultures the exchange of the peace has taken the form of a kiss on the cheek, an embrace, the clasping of the hand, or a bow. In the late medieval period the kiss came to be exchanged in a hierarchical movement, beginning with the celebrant who first received the kiss of the Lord by kissing the altar. the paten, the consecrated bread, or a paxboard ( a wooden plaque bearing the image of a saint or of the crucifixion). If it was a paxboard, that was then passed around the among the communicants, at least on

occasion. Eventually the peace was confined normally to the celebrant and the deacon, and then only on certain occasions."

There are no hard, fast rules governing the peace today. Howard Galley writes, "The Prayer Book specifies no particular gesture or procedure at the exchange of the peace. The original gesture, of course was a 'holy kiss' (Rom. 16:16). It is important to note, however, that the early Christians did not regard it as something bestowed by the clergy upon the people. Normally each worshiper exchanged it with those standing nearby, and it is the practice recommended here." (*The Ceremonies of the Eucharist: A Guide to Celebration*, Cowley Publications: Cambridge, MA, 1989, pp. 97-98). I follow Galley's guidelines. I will exchange the peace with some of those in the sanctuary and, as it immediately precedes the announcements which I do from the front of the nave, I may exchange it with a couple of people in the front pew, though not always, but that's it. It is not an extended affair. More pointedly, Aidan Kavanaugh writes, "The practice of ministers, sometimes including the president, taking the sign of peace into the congregation not only delays the liturgy needlessly but suggests that the peace of Christ is mediated in the Church by its clergy. Neither the Scripture nor the liturgy itself supports such a view....This suggests that the most appropriate procedure is for ministers and people to exchange the sign of peace among themselves where they stand and with their nearest neighbors, This is particularly appropriate at liturgies of some size and formality" (*Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style*, Pueblo Publishing Company: New York, 1982, pp.77-78). Anyway, hope this helps.

### PURPOSE AND ABUSES OF SAINTS' DAYS

Why do we commemorate the lives of certain persons? Historical luminaries of the Christian community serve for us as inspiring examples of particular qualities. "Christians have since ancient times honored men and women whose lives represent heroic commitment to Christ... [We] are not dealing primarily with absolutes of perfection but human lives, in all their diversity, open to the motions of the Holy Spirit. Many a holy life, when carefully examined, will reveal flaws or the bias of a particular moment in history or ecclesial perspective. ... And what, in one age, was taken as virtue may at another time seem misguided." [*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* - 1997, p. v]

These commemorations require careful implementation to conform to the rationale noted above. Throughout the ages through the present time, abuses have occurred, including veneration of pieces of saints' corpses, creating mini-gods from the listed saints, praying to saints for favors, mistaken inclusion of severe neurotics and psychotics among those honored, and the creation of a Disney-like fantasy world of these persons. Such abuses serve only as distractions from the covenant with God and from the Gospel of Christ.

### THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Day is a major Prayer Book feast, one of two national days (the other, since 1928, Independence Day) recognized with its own propers [assigned prayers and Bible readings]. "Agricultural festivals are of great antiquity, and common to many religions. Among the Jews, the three pilgrimage feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, each had agricultural significance. Medieval Christianity also developed a number of such observances, none of which, however, were incorporated in the Prayer Book. Our own Thanksgiving Day finds its roots in observances begun by colonists in Massachusetts and Virginia, a tradition later taken up and extended to the whole of the new American nation by the action of the Continental Congress." (*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* - 1994, p. 438.)

### VALENTINE'S DAY

St. Valentine's Day appears to refer to two Valentines, a Roman priest martyred about 269 and a bishop who was also martyred. The available legendary accounts might refer to one actual person. The association of the day with courtship and love may be connected with an ancient pagan festival, not with any notable tradition of a St. Valentine - which is among the reasons he is not officially commemorated by the Episcopal Church on Feb. 14th.