

Sermon for Morning Prayer The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Lessons:ⁱ

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Verse of the forty-first Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.ⁱⁱ

“... But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. ... When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the fourth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.ⁱⁱⁱ

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the

gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “[W]hosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”^{iv}

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Homily:

Our Lord’s figure of speech applies to many areas of the Church’s life. The “living water” is clearly the life-changing grace with which God has gifted humanity in the Person of His Son, our Redeemer. Today, however, we focus on the ministry which, like the Samaritan woman at Sychar, draws that metaphorical water from the well and pours it out for those who need it.

We are a Catholic Church, a fact we acknowledge each time we recite one of the historic Creeds, as “I believe in ... The holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints”. One of the principal points which distinguishes the Catholic Faith, and therefore, a Catholic Church, is its reliance on objectively valid Sacraments as incarnational occasions of God’s Presence in this physical world.

However, all of these Sacraments but Baptism and Matrimony require to be administered by a duly-ordained Priest or Bishop who stands in the authentic Apostolic Succession. Thus, without the assurance of this Succession, there can be no assurance that we are within the Catholic Church.

Thus when the founders of the Continuing Anglican church movement determined that an authentic Catholic church life required they separate from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA and from the Anglican Church of Canada, their first concern was to assure that their new jurisdiction would possess the historic Episcopate, the Episcopate which is the essential minister of all the Sacraments except Baptism and Matrimony and from which both of the other grades of Holy Order arise.

This coming Thursday will mark the thirty-second anniversary of the consecration of four new Anglican Bishops at a Lutheran Church in Denver, Colorado. Those four new Bishops, Charles Dale David Doren, Peter Francis Watterson, James Orrin Mote, and Robert Sherwood Morse, were consecrated in order to carry Christ's authority, and the Office of His Apostles, to the new church jurisdiction that began its separate existence at a large meeting at St. Louis, Missouri, in the Fall of 1977.

The two consecrating Bishops at Denver were Albert Chambers, the retired ECUSA Bishop of Springfield, Illinois, and Francisco Pagtakhan, the Missionary Bishop in the U.S. for the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. They assured that the new church movement would stand in the Apostolic Succession and thus could minister to its people Christ's Own Sacraments, for which we must be ever grateful.

That is why Thursday's anniversary appears on our Ordo Kalendar. However, as we celebrate and give thanks for that inestimable blessing, we should at the same time remember that the Bishops who coöperated in bringing this gift to us did not do so without difficulty or danger to themselves.

Further, behind them, stretching back in history, stand other Bishops, who likewise at great personal cost, or in actual or potential danger, and despite great difficulties, assured that this line of Apostolic Succession would continue in a way that brought it, ultimately, to us. Without their courage, their vision, and their sacrifices, we would not be able to encounter and receive Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the consecrated elements on His Altar.

In particular, upon three prior occasions decisions were made and acts were taken that were crucial to bringing this gift to us. The first of these occurred in 1690, during the civil war in the British Isles remembered as “The Glorious Revolution”.

King James, the VII of Scotland and II of England, was a Roman Catholic, so when he and his second wife, a Roman Catholic princess from Italy, had a son, the new Prince of Wales would inevitably be raised as a Roman Catholic. Thus if James remained King, the three British Crowns^v would be Roman Catholic for the foreseeable future.

Parliament feared this would threaten both the hard-won civil peace at home and Britain’s interests abroad, such as its resistance to the expansionist megalomania of Louis XIV of France. So James was expelled and his Protestant daughter Anne, with her husband and cousin, William of Orange, were installed as joint Sovereigns over the three Kingdoms.

But the new government needed to placate the Scots, whose nationalistic and religious fervor had played such a great part in the upheavals of the previous fifty years. Therefore the Crown surrendered to the Presbyterian hegemony in Scotland. The Scots Parliament disestablished the old, and Episcopal, Church of Scotland, and intruded the Presbyterian Church in its place.

The true Church actually became illegal and existed only as a persecuted underground body. This great tragedy for its leaders and members led to much oppression and suffering but, a century later, it was precisely this same act that was essential to our receiving the Apostolic Succession.

The second occasion that was crucial to our Succession occurred on November 14, 1784. When the clergy of the new State of Connecticut elected Samuel Seabury as their Bishop, he sailed for England to seek consecration. However, English law then restricted the English Bishops to consecrating only Bishops of the Established Churches of England and Ireland.

(A result of Seabury’s experience, and of his consecration in Scotland, was that Parliament later passed authorized the consecration of “Overseas Bishops” who would be in communion with the Church of England. This was the actual beginning of the late Anglican Communion. But that is another story.)

So Seabury went to Scotland, where the unofficial Scottish Episcopal Church paid no attention to the political and legal restrictions that bound the English Bishops. There the first Bishop of the newly-independent American church was consecrated in Aberdeen, Scotland by the Bishops of that illegal, underground Scottish Episcopal Church.

Through both Bishops Albert Chambers and Francisco Pagtakhan, we have received Bishop Seabury's line of succession from the Scottish Church. Thus for Seabury's perseverance and fortitude, and for the Scots Bishops' generosity and vision, we must always be deeply grateful.

Finally, the third of these events which led directly to the Denver Consecrations took place in 1948, when the Philippine Independent Catholic Church received the Anglican Episcopate from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA. The Filipino body began after the Spanish American War, when native Filipinos formed a new church for their new nation in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church which had been an integral part of the oppressive old Spanish colonial regime.

Recall how grudging was the attitude of the Episcopal Church in the 1970s toward the founders of our church, and how far it was prepared to go to prevent us from receiving the vital gift of the Apostolic Succession. Thus it is ironic how generously that same Episcopal Church in the 1940s extended that gift to these Filipinos, and equally ironic that this made it possible for Bishop Pagtakhan, thirty years later, to join with Bishop Chambers in passing on to us the historic Anglican Succession that the Episcopal Church was so determined we should not have.

As we look back along the past three and a half centuries and recall these particular times when the survival of the Episcopate in some one place or time seemed in doubt, we must marvel at the care with which Providence has contrived its continuance.

The importance of this is clear when a priest can stand here and, together with you, offer that *anamnesis* by which Christ allows us to re-present before the Father Christ's own "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world". Then he can present, on your behalf, your "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" only because he himself was ordained a Priest in the Church of God by some Bishop who, in almost all cases, had himself been

consecrated by Bishops of a Continuing Church whose Orders descend from those first four Bishops from the Denver Consecration.

(I say “in almost all cases” because from time to time we have been blessed to receive Priests who were ordained in the Lambeth Communion prior to its apostasy, or in the Roman Catholic Church, or in one of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, or in one of the legitimate Old Catholic Churches.^{vi})

Thus in these events we see yet again that God is ever watching out for us, providing for our most basic needs, in this case for the Sacramental integrity of our Church.

--oo0oo--

*The Rev'd Canon John A. Hollister^{vii}
January 24, 2010.*

ⁱ *Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xiv (PECUSA 1928, 1943).*

ⁱⁱ *Isaiah 41: 8-10, 17-29 (KJV).*

ⁱⁱⁱ *St. John 4: 1-14 (KJV).*

^{iv} *St. John 4: 14 (KJV).*

^v *James was, in his own person but separately, King of England and King of Scotland. As King of England, he was automatically and King of Ireland but the governments of those two Kingdoms were not united.*

^{vi} *That is, within the Union of Utrecht. However, since 2002, out of the bodies that formerly made up that Union, only the Polish National Catholic Church has remained faithful to historic Catholic principles.*

^{vii} *Priest Assistant, Christ Anglican Catholic Church, Metairie LA. Honorary Canon, the Diocese of the Resurrection, and Honorary Canon and Canon to the Ordinary, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.*