

So long as we profess and practice the traditional Anglican expression of “the Faith once delivered to the Saints”, for so long will we be fulfilling our Lord’s prayer to the Father for us:

“... I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.”⁸

Dearly beloved, “being one” as our Lord directed us is *true* uniformity.

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¹ This sermon was originally written on the Lesson for the Epistle at Holy Communion on Whitsunday, 2013.

² *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiii (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

³ I Samuel 16:1-13 (KJV).

⁴ Acts 2:1-21 (KJV).

⁵ *I.e.*, from a poor and unsophisticated rural district, unlikely to be conversant with arcane foreign languages from distant countries.

⁶ *I.e.*, approximately 9:00 AM.

⁷ Acts 2:6-8 (RSV).

⁸ St. John 17:20-23 (RSV).

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SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER

The Second Sunday after Trinity¹

(Year I)

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the sixteenth Chapter of the First Book of Samuel, otherwise called the First Book of the Kings.³

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew [SHOW] thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab [*ih-LIE-ab*], and said, Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. Then Jesse called Abinadab [*uh-BIN-uh-dabb*], and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah [*SHAM-uh*] to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him:

for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah [RAY-muh].”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Here beginneth the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.⁴

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?⁵ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites [EE-lumm-ights], and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia [kappa-DOE-she-uh], in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia [FRIDGE-ee-uh], and Pamphylia [pam-FILL-ee-uh], in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene [sigh-REE-nee], and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

And always, underlying whatever form of local service has become customary in any particular place, can be discerned the basic language and structure of the Book of Common Prayer in one or another of its historic editions.

Now there is something highly ironic about this great degree of diversity that pertains within our tiny corner of the Western Catholic world, especially when it is compared with the enforced uniformity that pertained as soon as the first Prayer Book came into use. And this irony is that within the Church of England, the place where that Prayer Book uniformity once existed, the Prayer Book tradition itself is essentially a dead letter.

Most Anglicans in England have abandoned the Prayer Book for one or another “updated” service. Even those who claim to be the most traditionalist Anglicans within the Church of England do not use the Book of Common Prayer which historically was one of their defining characteristics. Instead, they use the pedestrian and uninspiring current service of the Church of Rome, which is not Anglican in any meaningful sense.

Meanwhile, and among us who exist with the floreate diversity I described a moment ago, the Prayer Book tradition is alive, well, and even growing.

So let no one think that a rigid uniformity in the texts recited in church, or even in the practices that accompany liturgical celebrations, is any guarantee of the stability or survivability of the Church. The historical record makes it quite clear that it is not.

Conclusion:

What we “Continuing Anglicans” should, instead, learn from our own experience of diversity in celebration and practice is that it is not uniformity in externals that is the cement that holds traditional churches together but, instead, internal uniformity in the essentials of the Faith.

influence on the Prayer Book's version of the Mass rather than the competing Uses of Hereford, Bangor, York, or Lincoln.

Not only have the causes of that statutorily-imposed uniformity of worship passed from memory, but so has its reality. Our whole Anglican Catholic Church in North America comprises fewer people than would have a rural Deanery in that Sixteenth Century Church of England, yet among us there exists greater diversity of practice that could have been found in an entire diocese, or even province, of that time.

We have congregations that use one Missal and others that use another; we have some that use the traditional American Prayer Book and others the traditional Canadian one; some who use the current Prayer Book, whichever it may be, almost exactly according to its rubrics, and others that use the Prayer Book with a greater or a lesser degree of admixture of the Missal additions (some would say restorations) to the service. Yet this diversity has resulted in no serious dissensions among us nor has it often seriously discommoded our members on their travels, when they fulfill their Sunday obligation by visiting unfamiliar congregations.

The most that any of our people can complain is that they may have encountered something different from that to which they have become accustomed at home, something they find less appealing aesthetically. Never, however, have I heard anyone in this Church complain that he or she could not understand what was encountered in a distant congregation or that he or she heard anything expounded other than the Faith to which we are all committed.

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour⁶ of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith [SETH] God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew [SHOW] wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Lesson for the Epistle: “And ... the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, ‘... [H]ow is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?’”⁷ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Introduction:

On Whitsunday, or Pentecost, 1549, a new statute went into effect in England. Called “The Act of Uniformity”, it required every cathedral, parish church, and chapel in that country to cease using the Latin Masses that had been in use theretofore and, in their places, to use, and to use exclusively, the first English translation and redaction of the Mass. This First Prayer Book of King Edward VI had been prepared by the Archbishop

of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer and is what we know as the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.

Theme:

That new service book was not only the first translation of the Mass into English, it was also the first, the very first, Book of Common Prayer. And so today, Whitsunday, in the year of our Lord 2013, is the 464th anniversary of the Prayer Book tradition. In other words, this is the birthday of this uniquely beautiful service, the service which over nearly five centuries has become the single most distinctive feature of Anglicanism as we know it.

That is why today, as on most Whitsundays here at Christ Church, we are celebrating our Sunday service, not according to our familiar 1928 Book of Common Prayer, which is the sixth edition in succession to that 1549 one, but, instead, according to that original 1549 service instead. You will notice a few differences from what you are accustomed to, but those differences are, indeed, few and are mostly in how certain parts of the service are arranged, not in what is said during those parts themselves.

Development:

There were two prime objectives to this Act of Uniformity, the anniversary of which we celebrate today. One of them does not seem in the least strange to us, namely, that the regular Sunday service should have been translated from Latin into what was then the daily language of the people. For that was one of the most important, as well as the most laudable, aims of the Reformation: that the public worship of the Church should be understood by essentially every person who hears the same.

In fact, down to within living memory, that was one of the most obvious differences between the two parts of the Western Church, that which looks for its authority to the Ref-

ormation and that which looks for the same to the Bishop of Rome. The churches of the Reformation, and those others which, like our own, were influenced by that Reformation although they never became Protestant, have for nearly five centuries conducted their public worship in the vernacular, while right down to 1970, the Church of Rome conducted its worship in Latin.

However, those among us who can actually remember when those old Latin services were the weekly fare of all Roman Catholics are now, at the very least, on the thresh hold of retirement, if not well past it. And most of the Churches of the East have long adopted the same principal as well. So we today live in a church environment in which it is taken for granted that the church's official worship should be in the language of the country in which it is conducted and in which, in fact, our own form of that worship—again, the first Catholic service ever to be rendered into any modern language—is itself so archaic as to be, for many, virtually a foreign tongue.

To that extent, and on that point, the Reformation has triumphed.

But the Act of Uniformity had another purpose, one that, to us, seems just as strange as would the regular conduct of our liturgy in a dead language. This other purpose was to impose complete uniformity of worship throughout the Kingdom of England, so that each diocese, and each parish church and other chapel, should use the same Mass text as every other diocese, parish, and chapel.

The theological and political disputes, which Parliament sought to resolve by imposing that degree of uniformity, have long passed into the dim corners of history. They are now of interest only to specialists in English social and ecclesiastical history and we need not concern ourselves with them, any more than we need concern ourselves with questions such as why it was the Use of Salisbury Cathedral that became the dominant