

SOUNDS

of

Volume 40 No. 23

June 5, 2011

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O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

FROM THE RECTOR

The feast of the Ascension is surely among the most embarrassing of Christian claims to worldly-minded folk, especially in these days of the early 21st century, when human wisdom is at an all-time high. The notion that our Lord could ascend into the heavens is beyond rational belief, or, to be more honest, beyond what we have seen or think could be true. And if we cannot see it or think it, it cannot be, period.

Despite such a view, we continue to profess our belief in the Ascension when we recite the Creed. "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father" is how the Nicene Creed puts it ("the right hand of God" in the Apostles' Creed). Is this one of those times we hurry along just to keep up with the celebrant, saying words we neither believe nor understand?

Perhaps to some this article of faith is on a par with the notion of God as "maker of heaven and earth", or "he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary", or even "on the third day he rose again": A catena designed to stretch Christian affirmation beyond credibility. Is that how we see these parts of the Creed? Some churches today, acting beyond the latitude granted by either the universal practice of the Church or even the canons of the Episcopal Church, recite "statements of faith", putting ancient truth into "more accessible" (less embarrassing?) language. Whether such language is true or not is entirely beside the point in the judgment of such revisionists.

When I was a child, I had a very clear mental picture of what the Ascension meant. To say that our Lord was seated on the right hand of the Father brought to my mind the picture of Jesus sitting on a gigantic hand, just like the moment last week when I carried on my hand an errant lady bug from my overheated car to the safety of a cool branch by Thai's pond. Of course, that childish image was erroneous in a wide variety of ways, not the least of which is because it was a literal, if misbegotten, interpretation. In my mind's eye I saw precisely

what the Creed says (Hadn't King Kong done the same with Faye Wray?), but I did not see what the Creed actually means. Poetic imagery was not part of my vision, and were I still trying to understand the Creed in a literal sort of way, it would indeed be impossible to believe the truth it conveys. Such thinking is naïve in a child; when the Russian cosmonaut who rocketed into space reported he had not seen God out there, his thinking was sarcastic and foolish.

To be sure, there is one affirmation in the Creed rooted in history as concretely as truth could be: "He was crucified under Pontius Pilate." We speak of both the deed and the moment in time when it occurred. What we do not recite in those facts is what that crucifixion meant. For that truth, which is really more than just a set of implications, we have to look more carefully at what the Creed affirms. So, the Creed has both poetic imagery and historical record. Understanding comes later, as truth takes hold.

The truth of the Ascension speaks to the exaltation, not the elevation, of Christ. As Paul Zahl and the late Frederick Barbee wrote in their masterful study of Cranmer's original collects, the Ascension points to a Christianity "which is not so much high-flying as high-minded." The Ascension lifts our thinking to truth and themes beyond the mundane, that is, literally not tied to the earth. In the same way that it is impossible to listen to a careful performance (for instance) of Bach's incomparable "Jesu, joy of man's desiring" and not have one's thoughts and spirits raised to a higher level, so the Ascension points us beyond the temporal thoughts, cares, and occupations of our daily existence, and into the realm of the eternal, where our Risen Lord makes constant intercession for us. All of deity that he brought to us in his Incarnation now in our fullest humanity returns to the Father by the Ascension. That is a truth worth affirming week by week.

UTO INGATHERING THIS SUNDAY



Express gratitude for the gifts you have been given by joining in the UTO offering this Sunday, June 5th. If you cannot be present, please return the blue UTO envelope you received to the church by mail.

HOUSE TOUR PATRONS AND FRIENDS

By now, you should have received your invitation to become a Patron or Friend of the 2011 Potomac Country House Tour.

Big News! There will be a very special treat this year for all Gold and Silver Patrons. They will have the opportunity to take a private tour of Casa Amore on River Road as well as to attend our annual Homeowners' Reception.

Your donation also includes tickets for the tour: Gold Patrons receive 6 tickets, Silver patrons receive 4, and Friends receive 2 tickets.

Please return your card and donation by June 6th, the booklet deadline. Donations will be accepted after that date but may miss inclusion in the booklet. If you have not received your invitation or would like additional cards to pass on to friends please call the church office at 301-365-2055.

SUMMER CHOIR

All current and former choristers are welcome to sing with the St Francis Choir during the month of June and on the first weekend in July. Adult parishioners *with choral experience* may join us, as well.

We meet in the choir room on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. and prepare music for the 10 o'clock Holy Eucharist. This is a good way for choristers to keep up their "chops" and for those unable to make the regular commitment during the fall and spring terms to contribute to this vital ministry.

- GD

JOY AND CONCERN

Please join in prayer for William (Bill) Smyth who died on May 26, 2011.

BBC CHORAL EVENSONG

Since 1926, the BBC has been broadcasting choral evensong live every week from England's various cathedrals and abbeys, collegiate chapels, and prominent parishes. This long-running series has brought millions in the UK the glorious sounds of their enviable choral tradition. Happily, those of us on the other side of the pond now can partake of this much-loved tradition and pattern of worship via the Internet. Simply follow this link:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tp7r

You can also search for BBC Radio 3 through your Internet browser to reach this site and their myriad other offerings.

Wednesday, June 8th, the broadcast will be from Wells Cathedral. The introit will be my setting of the evening hymn, *Glory to thee, my God, this night*, an anthem I wrote for that choir last year. This service will commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of Thomas Ken (1637-1711), Bishop of Bath and Wells, and the author of the text I set. Ken is considered one of the founding fathers of modern English hymnody. You certainly will recognize his most famous verse, which we call the *Doxology* ("Praise God, from whom all blessings flow"), and which concludes the anthem they will sing.

- GD

2011 GRADS & PROUD PARENTS

Please remember to convey the names, present school, and plans for continued education of any graduating members of your family by June 16th, 2011.

COMING UP AT ST FRANCIS CHURCH

For more information, please visit our website at www.stfrancispotomac.org

SUNDAY, JUNE 5

UTO SUNDAY

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
10:00 am Holy Eucharist
12:15 pm High School Small Groups

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

7:00 pm Centering Prayer—Undercroft

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

10:00 am Holy Eucharist
11:00 am Rector's Bible Study

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

7:00 am Men's Bible Study
5:30 Youth Bible Study

SUNDAY, JUNE 12

HUNGER SUNDAY

8:00 am Holy Eucharist

Sunday, 6/12 continued

10:00 am Holy Eucharist
12:15 pm High School Small Groups

TUESDAY, JUNE 14

7:00 pm Centering Prayer—Undercroft

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

10:00 am Holy Eucharist

THURSDAY, JUNE 17

7:00 am Men's Bible Study
5:30 Youth Bible Study

SUNDAY, JUNE 19

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
10:00 am Holy Eucharist
12:15 pm High School Small Group

The Scripture appointed for the Seventh Sunday after Easter
Acts 1:6-14, Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36, 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11, John 17:1-11

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PUBLISHER: William M. Shand, III; **STAFF:** Anne Haller, Herb Haller, Liz McLean McCordic and Helen Stupar.

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