

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXV, Number 22

Edited by Don Ruthig

June 10th, 2014

FROM THE RECTOR

Christianity – a winner on the track and field

WITH the arrival of summer, all excuses for playing hooky from the gym have vanished out of the window. It is not that I object to working out. Generally, I am quite conscientious about it. But the truth is I find the gymnasium quite boring.

Body contact sports are much more to my liking, but unfortunately Rugby, American Football and Gaelic Football are just a tad too painful for my aging body to endure. So, like it or not, the gym it has to be. And funnily enough, I believe St Paul would tell me to suck it up and get on with it

Now St. Paul is not the sort of chap one might expect to meet at the YMCA or the health spa – doing aerobics, or wheezing around on a treadmill, or working out on one of those weird elliptical exercise machines. Still less would one expect to see him, clad in shorts and tank top, doing warming exercises up beside a running track.

The reason for this is most people picture St. Paul as an intellectual and scholar – in other words, a bit nerdy. But, actually, you'd be quite wrong. There's nothing nerdy about St. Paul.

But, then, it is only in this decidedly wimpy age of ours that Christianity has been associated with nerdiness. Not so long ago young men needed both good grades and a respectable athletic record to get into seminary. Prowess in at least one "manly" sport – football, crew, track or boxing – was considered an important qualification for an aspiring clergyman.

Indeed, The Rt. Rev. David Shepherd, an internationally famous English cricketer, was a wildly popular Bishop of Liverpool – more or less the equivalent of Babe Ruth being elected Bishop of Maryland.

However some 50 or 60 years ago, when Bishop Shepherd was being educated, educators subscribed to Juvenal's maxim "*Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*" – "A sound mind in a sound body is a thing to be prayed for."

Indeed, educators in those days shared the belief with their Greek and Roman counterparts that a sound mind was actually the product of a sound body – that physical fitness was a precondition for optimum intellectual effort.

When archaeologists unearthed the Lyceum, the philosopher Aristotle's famous academy in Athens, the evidence that persuaded them it was really Aristotle's school was the discovery of its wrestling and gymnastics arena. Nobody today thinks of Aristotle as an athlete, but his brilliant mind was, in part, molded in the gym.

St. Paul was a highly educated man in both the Jewish and Greek traditions. While Jews didn't hold physical fitness in great esteem as an educational tool, the Greeks certainly did, and it is hard to imagine that St. Paul managed to avoid the physical side of his Greek education.

I don't know whether he was much of a boxer or a wrestler (both popular sports with the Greeks and Romans), but he was an athletics fan. You can tell that by the way he uses runners and races as metaphors many times in his epistles.

In fact, sometimes he sounds a bit like one of those veteran football coaches who see the whole world in terms of a game of football.

Take for example, the passage from his First Epistle to the Corinthians appointed to be read on Septuagesima Sunday: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye might obtain."

That's an athlete who has won some and lost some, and knows that winning is better. What St. Paul is saying is that in order to win the prize, you've got to be in the race.

Paul was speaking to his audience in a language they understood. The Greeks of all classes, even slaves, were avid sports fans. They worked out daily at the public baths (the equivalent of our health clubs and spas) and eagerly attended sporting events at their local stadium.

Calendar of Events

Weekly Activities at St Stephen's

Mondays, 6.30 PM: Bridge Club meets in Quimby Hall
Tuesdays, 7.00 AM: Breakfast Fellowship at the Nautilus Diner
Thursdays, 10.00 AM: Knitting Circle meets in Quimby Hall
Fridays, 10.30 AM: Bible Study in the Cadwalader Room

Special Events

Tuesday, June 10th, 7.00 PM: Parish Life Committee meets in the Cadwalader Room.
Wednesday, June 18th, 12.00 Noon: The Ladies Who Lunch at the Valley Inn.
Wednesday, June 18th: Silly Summer Suppers begin in Quimby Hall
Monday, June 23rd - Friday, June 27th, 9.00 AM - 12.00 Noon: Vacation Bible School

Corinth, like most large Graeco-Roman cities, had a magnificent public stadium and often played host to international competitions that attracted athletic stars and hopefuls from all over the Roman Empire.

Christianity, Paul says, is like an athletics event. You have got to run in the race if you want to win the prize. Spectators don't expect to win prizes at athletic events and nor can spectators expect to win prizes in Christianity.

It might seem strange to think of Christianity as a spectator sport. But, in fact, it's a very apt metaphor. There are many people who consider themselves Christians, but who, in reality, are merely spectators. They are as different from real Christians as the fan in the stands is from the quarterback throwing the passes.

The fan might speak football jargon as well as the quarter back; he might have an even better grasp of strategy and tactics; but when it comes down to it, it is the fellow who is out on the field who collects the accolades and the million-dollar paycheck.

When all's said and done, the football fan is simply a consumer of football.

The same is true of Christianity: Many churchgoers are not so much Christian as consumers of Christianity.

Sad to relate, it's an easy enough attitude to slip into. Consumers of Christianity tend to be connoisseurs of religion: liturgy, theology and preaching. They savor the faith more for the manner of its execution rather than what it means. They critique the way things are done instead of practicing the doing of it. In other words, with them style triumphs over substance.

Like football or any other sport, Christianity requires practice. You can't just walk in off the street, take off your coat, run out on the field and throw a winning pass. It takes years of effort – physical and mental effort – to become even a passable professional quarter back. And same goes for Christianity – except, of course, there is no such thing as an amateur Christian.

With Christianity, there are no half measures: Either you play the game full time, or you'll find yourself back in the bleachers, looking on. Being a Christian takes constant effort. Perhaps this explains why we call Christians who take their faith seriously "practicing Christians."

But while there are many similarities between a sporting life and a Christian one, there is one a huge difference – and this lies in the division of the spoils, in the distribution of the prizes.

In the world of sport, there are no second place winners. Only one athlete gets the gold. With Christianity, the odds are infinitely better: Providing you enter the race, you're guaranteed a a prize – and not just any prize.

With Christianity there are no second place winners. As Jesus explains in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, every one who enters the race wins first prize. Unlike the world of sport, with Christianity, quite literally, every one's a champion. **GPH**

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR
TRINITY SUNDAY**

June 15th, 2014

8.00 AM & 9.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION

The Epistle: I Corinthians 12:4-14

The Gospel: St. Luke 11:9-13

11.00 AM CHORAL MATTINS

The Psalter: 98, 100

The First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus: 43:1-12, 27-33

The Second Lesson: St. Luke 11:9-13

FROM DIANE NOVICKI

Noah's Ark Vacation Bible School

ST. STEPHEN'S will be having Vacation Bible School beginning on Monday, June 23rd and continuing through Friday, June 27th, from 9.00 AM - 12.00 Noon.

There will be a modest \$20 fee to cover snacks, crafts and supplies. For additional siblings the fee is \$15 each.

Please call the church office, 410-560-6776, with your name and address so that we may send registration forms to you. The forms, along with the fee, are to be brought with you on the first day of VBS.

Confirmation Classes to begin

In anticipation of the upcoming visit of Bishop John Vaughan in September, confirmation classes will begin shortly. For further

information or to sign up for these classes please call Brock Johnson at 410-825-8007.

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

Plan to join us on February 19th

THIS month the Ladies Who Lunch will be meeting at 11.45 AM (please note the earlier time to ensure we get a table large enough - the Peppermill does not take reservations) at The Peppermill, on Wednesday, February 19th. Why not join us for a convivial get-together over a delicious meal? Good food and good fellowship -- what more could you want? To reserve your place call Joyce Perlberg at 410-252-2680.

✠ PARISH PRAYER LIST ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice & Dr. Bob's Place. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office at 410 560 6776.

RECOVERY: Fr Mike✠, Fr Tim✠, Carolyn, Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, John, Rodney, Hamilton, Donald, Annie, Evelyn, Cal, Finton, Fran, Tracey, Linda Lou, Edie, Adele, Baby Charlie, Angie, Oona, Cary, Janna, Martina, Leela, Bobby Sally, Isabelle, Julie, Ray, Courtney, Mary, Phyllis, Liz, Joe, Indra, Ally, Marjorie, Steve, Judy.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Ann, Lydia, Remi, Melba, Donna, Josh, Kim, Shane, Susan, Paula, Hannah.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN. Lt. Col. Harry Hughes.

COLLECT FOR WHITSUNDAY AND THE EMBER DAYS

O GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end.

AMEN

O ALMIGHTY God, who hast committed to the hands of men the ministry of reconciliation; We humbly beseech thee, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, to put it into the hearts of many to offer themselves for this ministry; that thereby mankind may be drawn to thy blessed kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Book of Common Prayer Pages 180 and 260

✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Tel.: Office (410) 560-6776; Rectory (410) 665-1278
Web Address: ststeve.com

RECTOR: The Rev. Canon Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Venerable Michael Kerouac

ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Happy Riley
(410- 252-8674)

WEDDING CO-ORDINATORS: Happy Riley (410-252-8674)
Martha Miller (410-321-9038)

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00 am: Said Eucharist

9.15 am: Sung Eucharist (*with Nursery & Church School*)

11.00 am: Choral Mattins (*1st Sunday: Choral Eucharist*)

6.00 pm: Choral Evensong (*1st Sunday only*)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6.00 pm: Evening Prayer

Friday Noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5.00 pm: Family Eucharist.

Return Service Requested

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