

Saint Stephen's News

SAINT STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

20 January 2015

FROM THE RECTOR

Making sense of the slaughter in Paris

The U.S. Administration's response to the Moslem terrorists' atrocity in Paris, France, has been as bizarre as the 'guidelines' it imposed on official speakers at gatherings marking the 10th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th, 2001.

On that occasion the White House instructed speakers to to play down – or avoid mentioning altogether – al Qaida, the Muslim terrorist organisation that perpetrated the attack.

This time it still shrinks from calling a spade a spade. While its spokesmen concede the slaughter at the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* was an act of terror, they have studiously avoided naming the religion in whose name the act was committed.

It is a rather like discussing the events at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, but omitting all mention of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The terrorist attacks committed by young Muslims are entirely religiously motivated. They are being perpetrated by men for whom the slaughter of people who do not share their religious beliefs is a salvific act and a sacred duty.

Trying, as both Washington and the Europeans are doing, to make sense of what happened without involving clergy – Christian, Jewish and, yes, Muslim – dooms the efforts to failure. After all, what theology wrought, only theology can heal.

And this demands we to confront the religious motive behind the attacks (indeed, the sole motive behind the attacks) honestly, squarely, and without equivocation.

In both America and France, we are told, the separation of church and state is a paramount constitutional principle. Religion has no place in the public square, and especially when it comes to dealing with such divisive issue as attacks by Muslim terrorists.

The politicians, however, have had well over a decade in which to work their magic, and they have failed – dismally. But this should not be altogether surprising.

A time hallowed political strategy for dealing with inconvenient truths is to sweep them under the table. This what happened with the events of 9/11, and now the recent terrorist acts in Paris seem to be being treated in the same fashion – not just here but in Paris and Berlin. There has been a massive protest march – a nostalgic throwback to the Vietnam era – but few signs of any serious action.

We are repeatedly treated to the old saw that there is something 'unIslamic' about terrorism and that 'Islam is a religion of peace.' This is simply untrue. Islam was conceived and nurtured in bloodshed. For most of its existence, its primary instrument of conversion has been the sword.

Conquest of Mecca in 630 AD was followed by four and a half centuries of Jihad during which the Christian communities of North Africa and the Fertile Crescent were wiped out and Islamic rule extended by conquest to Sicily, much of Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.

The Crusades are certainly among the most shameful episodes in the history of the West. But vicious and bloodthirsty though they were, they were a belated response to more than 450 years of Muslim aggression.

As Christians, we cannot deny the evils committed the name of our faith. But at the same time as repenting the violence we cannot deny the long history of Islamic slaughter, conquest and enslavement that prompted wicked men to repay evil with evil in the name of Christ.

That said, it is doubtless true that most Muslims are peace loving, and would like nothing better than to live in harmony with their neighbours of other faiths.

Yet a glance at the television and the newspapers daily attests to the unhappy fact that large numbers of Muslims who live both here and in the European Community are open in their contempt for their nominally Christian host nations and refuse to assimilate into the societies in which they live.

This is not a problem that can be solved by pretending it does not exist – the way apparently favoured by most Western politicians. Nor, from a Christian point of view, ought it be solved by expelling wholesale Muslims who refuse to assimilate.

Such measures would be unChristian. Jesus, after all, commanded us to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us. But they would also probably be quite counterproductive breeding further mistrust, hatred and, no doubt, terrorism.

To reach a solution, we must first identify the cause. People in the political arena attribute this Muslim hatred of things Western to the general poverty of the Islamic world. This is unpersuasive.

In fact, all the evidence indicates that the cause of the hatred lies in the teachings of the religion, itself. To be sure, there is a strain of Islam that is, indeed, peaceful and seeks to live peace with its non-Islamic neighbours. But this came about relatively recently – a development that took place following the defeat of the Ottoman Army by the Austrians and Poles at the Battle of Vienna in 1683.

The 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. 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.

FOR RECOVERY: Carolyn, Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, John, Rodney, Donald, Evelyn, Cal, Finton, Fran, Tracey, Edie, Adele, Oona, Cary, Janna, Martina, Leela, Bobby Sally, Isabelle, Julie, Ray, Courtney, Mary, Phyllis, Liz, Joe, Indra, Ally, Marjorie, Steve, Judy, David, Wendy, John, Joy, Walt, Tina, Nina, James, Nancy, Janet, Connie, Hobie, Nathan

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Lydia, Ann, Melba, Donna, Josh, Kim, Shane, Susan, Paula, Hannah, Scott, Charles

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

The Ottoman defeat enabled Islamic scholars to explore Christian thought in new and more open ways. Consequently, Christian humanistic ideas began to influence Islamic thinking. This was not received in the Islamic world with utterly unbridled enthusiasm.

The 18th Century theologian Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in what is now Saudi Arabia preached getting back to basics and purging Islam of the heresies and innovations derived from Christian thought. Thanks to the Saudis' use of their oil money to fund mosques, schools and social programs, Wahhabism has become the most potent force in the Muslim world.

But what Christianity wrought in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries – the years during which much of Islam's most inspired spiritual works were written – it can repeat today.

We can help Muslim communities that uphold humanistic Islam to confront their co-religionists who promote the Wahhabist *credo* of violence. In fact, we cannot do otherwise – for in order to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world, we must first win over the hearts and minds of the Muslims in our midst.

But for this to work, our political leaders must drop their policies of pretence and denial. Like it or not, faith must confront faith, and in this process there no room for politics – just straight talking.

While, as Christians, Jesus commanded us to forgive those who sin against us, we must make it plain that for forgiveness to be effective it must be sincerely accepted and acted upon. Our faith, moreover, does not require us to show an infinite tolerance for evil behaviour. Indeed, it requires us to lay down our very lives to protect and defend the innocent. **GPH**

THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL

25 January 2015

8.00 & 9.15 AM EUCHARISTS

For the Epistle. Acts 9: 1–22

The Gospel. St Matthew 19:27–30

11.00 AM MATTINS

The Psalter. Psalm 66

The First Lesson. Isaiah 45: 18–25

The Second Lesson. St Matthew 19:27–30

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE

Red Cross Blood Drive on 27 January

The American Red Cross will be collecting blood donations at Saint Stephen's on Tuesday, 27 January from 2.00–7.30 PM. The need for blood is constant, but it is crucial during the winter months. You can assist the Red Cross in their life-saving efforts by scheduling an appointment today. Please contact Happy Riley in the parish office: 410-560-6776 or dpc@ststeve.com

SAINT STEPHEN'S CHOIR ACADEMY

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Saint Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Office: 410 560 6776 · Rectory: 410 665 1278

Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Ven. Canon Guy P. Hawtin, *Rector*

The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki, *Associate Rectors*

The Rev. Mr M. Wiley Hawks, *Deacon* · Adric, *Magister Chori*

Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8 AM: Said Eucharist

9.15 AM: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11 AM: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

6 PM: Choral Evensong (as announced: evensong.ststeve.com)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6 PM: Evening Prayer

Friday 12 NOON: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5 PM: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Mondays, 6.30 PM: Bridge Club

Tuesdays, 7 PM: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

Thursdays, 10 AM: Knitting Circle

Fridays, 10.30 AM: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Wednesday, 21 January, 12 NOON:

The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Joey Chiu's

Tuesday, 27 January, 2.00–7.30 PM:

American Red Cross Blood Drive

(phone the Parish Office for an appointment)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Timonium, MD 21093

11856 Mays Chapel Road

Saint Stephen's Anglican Church

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