

# St Stephen's News

## St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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FROM THE RECTOR

### A vital lesson Ancient Rome offers America

Moving house is a bittersweet experience – especially if you've lived in the place for 30 years or more. Downsizing is painful. It means necessarily parting with things that have been part of your life for 40 or 50 years – some of which you can cheerfully bid *adieu*; others that evoke sentimental memories.

My mother had no problem parting with anything. "I'm sick of living with other people's furniture," she once declared as cherished family heirlooms bit the dust. For mother, downsizing was an art form. She was a minimalist long before minimalism became fashionable.

I often wondered if her ultimate goal was to inhabit just a single room, furnished with only a bed, an easy chair, a bookcase and a reading lamp. It was a goal she, thanks to my father, failed to reach, but she did pass the genetic predisposition along to one of her granddaughters, namely Catherine.

Our other daughter, Elizabeth, is more attuned to my inclinations. And, because of Charlotte's illness, both daughters are helping me move, she counters to some degree Catherine's ruthless elimination of the "useless, unnecessary and downright ugly." It is a phenomenon the world of commerce knows as creative tension.

Among the artifacts Elizabeth has saved from annihilation are the DVD's of the HBO-Television series *Rome* – a birthday present she bestowed upon me best part of a decade ago.

My family claims it is well nigh impossible to buy me gifts. I have all the sweaters and socks I could possibly need. I don't wear ties, and my handkerchiefs and bandanas could stock a fair sized haberdashery. They even hesitate to buy me books on the grounds I have probably already read them.

Imagine then my daughter Elizabeth's sense of triumph when she came across the *Rome* DVD's at a local store. The series is an historical drama set at the time of the demise of the Roman Republic, the rise to power of Julius Caesar and the imposition of the imperial system.

"Just the thing," she thought, "Dad hardly ever watches TV, but he's always been deeply interested in Roman history and the series is supposed to be historically accurate."

She hadn't seen the series herself and it caused her considerable surprise and no little embarrassment to discover it contained not just graphic violence but – as in many British-made TV productions these days – also explicit sex.

However, I explained to her, that is exactly what Rome was like at the time the old Roman Republic was stumbling along the path to blood soaked oblivion. Rome was, indeed, an exceedingly violent and sinful city at that time.

Time-hallowed Roman morality had broken down. Husbands betrayed wives, wives husbands, parents children and children parents – not only sexually but politically as well. The city's politicians no longer tolerated principled opposition, but rather recruited street gangs to slaughter their rivals.

Julius Caesar didn't actually overthrow republican government. He simply took advantage of the chaos to assume power. Two brutal civil wars later, his nephew and

adopted heir, Octavian (deified as Augustus), laid the foundations of the imperial system.

Some might describe "*Rome*" as "*The Sopranos*" in togas, but this does the series a disservice. Its great virtue – admittedly an odd way of describing the graphic portrayal of sex and violence – is that it presents an historically illiterate generation with a lesson on the fate of societies that shuck off the morality that underpins them.

A remarkable thing about the Romans is how much like us they were. They had similar governmental and legal systems – a senate, an assembly, and courts of law. They maintained a highly trained and well-equipped professional army.

They had fire departments, health clinics, banks and insurance companies. They relaxed in bars, restaurants, health spas and nightclubs. They lived in apartment blocks, town houses and luxurious suburban villas – all piped with running water.

They vacationed by the sea, went to the theater, adored chariot racing (their answer to Nascar) and sports of all kind – the more strenuous and violent the better.

Another remarkable thing about the Romans is how very different we are from them. And the difference arises from 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, ring the parish office on 410 560 6776.

**FOR RECOVERY:** Peter, June, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Alan, Terry, Helen, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Robert\*, David, Jan, Susie, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Cour Marie, Jim, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John, David, Adrian, Tom, Michell, Aida, Mai, Al, Kathy, Jack, Lewey, Stephen, Pamela, Isobel & Judy

**FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE:** Stephen, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Cindy, Jacob, Casey, Beth, Erin and Aubery

**ON ACTIVE SERVICE:** Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; MSGT Michael Holter, USAF; Cpt Fiodor Strikovski, US Army.

fact that Rome had not been exposed to Christianity. Rome was a society in which pity, mercy and love towards one's fellow men were not regarded as virtues, but merely options – and not widely admired options at that.

Slavery reached into all areas of Roman life. Even the poorest of homes had one. They were the Romans' household appliances, and industrial machines. At the same time, a large proportion of the city's professionals – trusted political advisers, administrators and physicians and the like – were slaves. Yet slaves had no rights. They could be killed at will.

The ancient Roman virtues were those of self-discipline – frugality, loyalty, civic pride, courage in battle, and stoicism in adversity. They were instilled in every citizen from childhood. But when good times came, prosperity edged aside frugality, loyalty and civic pride as people strove for their own individual advancement. Nothing could save the Roman Republic, but the advent of the Christian faith saved the civilization that emerged from it, enabling it to continue, as the Byzantine Empire for another 1,000 years.

The virtues Christianity fostered have proved immeasurably more powerful and more enduring than those of ancient

Rome. Over the past two millennia they have transformed the West – enshrining love for humanity as the over-arching virtue and ushering in an era of democracy.

Worrisomely, however, the political violence attendant on the emergence of the Antifa movement (and its allies, fellow travellers and “useful idiots”) echoes gang violence inspired by the nihilistic hatreds and overweening ambition that brought about the collapse of the Roman Republic.

Americans of all political stripes could benefit from watching or revisiting the *Rome* series. It teaches that America abandons Christianity and the virtues it imparts at its peril.

GPH✘

FROM THE PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE

## Church mowing opportunity

St. Stephen's brand spanking new Model 140 John Deere tractor/mower needs some friends to help it keep the lawn pretty. The machine has been tested and found to be easy to run. The current operator now needs 2 or 3 helpers so that each team member need only mow once a month. (more often is OK if desired). Mowing takes about 1 1/2 hours. Call Dick Huffman for details or chat at 9:15 coffee hour. Cell: 443-764-6554 or email [huffdad1@verizon.net](mailto:huffdad1@verizon.net)

FROM THE MAGISTER CHORI

## Labor Day Hymnfest raises \$1,433 for hurricane relief

Instead of celebrating Labor Day in superheated automobiles in miles-long traffic jams in locations like the Bay Bridge or on I-95, on Sunday, September 2nd, 24 parishioners and friends celebrated the last public holiday of summer by singing their favorite hymns.

The Labor Day Hymnfest took the place of St Stephen's first Choral Evensong of the academic year and the goal was to raise money to aid the unfortunate victims of Hurricane Harvey. The boy choristers on call to belt out descants on the final verses.

The result was an evening of good fellowship and fun with a free will offering that raised a hefty \$1.433 for the American Red Cross's Hurricane Harvey relief efforts.

FROM THE KNITTING CIRCLE

## Have a ball on Thursdays

Relax in friendly company and acquire, or simply improve, a useful skill that not only calms the fevered brow. Join us in the parish library on Thursdays at 10.00 AM. Can't knit? Cindie Baker will teach you. J You'll have a ball.

## St 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](http://www.ststeve.com)

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*

The Venerable Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*

The Rev. Michael Belt and The Rev. John Novicki

*Associate Rectors*

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, *Pastoral Care Chaplain*

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

### SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

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

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

6pm: Choral Evensong (as announced) –

[evensong.ststeve.com](http://evensong.ststeve.com)

### WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

## Calendar of Events

### WEEKLY

**Monday, 6.30pm:** Bridge Club

**Tuesday, 7am:** Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

**Thursday, 10am:** Knitting Circle

**Friday, 10.30am:** Bible Study

### MONTHLY & SPECIAL

#### Parish Life

*Tuesday, September 12, 7.00 pm*

#### The Ladies Who Lunch

*Wednesday, September 20th. Pappas Restaurant, 550 Cranbrook Road, Cockeysville. To reserve: Call Sara Douglas 410-560-9026*

#### Afternoon Tea

*Thursday September 21st, 2.00 pm*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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