

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

Preconceptions and the historical Jesus

Every Christian, I'd venture to guess, has a unique mental picture of Jesus Christ – an image formed in large part by what they've learned about him in Sunday School, modified to a greater or lesser degree by what they have learned about him since.

When I was a very small boy, my mental image of Jesus was formed by a very nice Sunday School teacher, whose favorite hymn was "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." Frankly, I found it very hard to relate to a Son of God who wore dresses, open-toe sandals and a decidedly girly haircut.

And I continued to find it hard to picture Jesus as Son of God in any meaningful way until I encountered a Sunday School teacher who had learned about the Holy Shroud, while fighting as an infantryman in the Italian campaign.

The face of the image on the Shroud of Turin exudes exactly the sort of confidence, power and majesty that I had expected to see in the face of the Son of God.

The spirit of the age also has a profound effect on shaping our personal images of Jesus Christ. The Victorian Age, for instance, embraced wholeheartedly the Spirit of Progress – the notion of "Can Do."

Small wonder then that they unashamedly espoused the concept of muscular Christianity and depicted Christ as a blue-eyed, blond-haired, broad-shouldered Anglo-Saxon frontiersman, who would probably more at home on a thoroughbred hunter than a humble donkey.

In the late Middle Ages, by contrast, people tended to picture Christ as a humble man of the people, poor, earthy and worlds apart from the richly caparisoned nobles whose whims, fancies and insatiable greed made their lives difficult if not intolerable.

They tended to lay emphasis Jesus Christ the Shepherd, rather than Jesus Christ the carpenter's adopted son. Carpenters, you see, were really quite well off in the Middle Ages.

The image of Christ presented by many churches today is quite similar to that of the late Middle Ages. He is presented as a poor, humble and unlettered man, the leader of illiterate peasants engaged in a quest for social and economic justice.

That Jesus today is often portrayed as the peerless revolutionary shouldn't be altogether surprising because for many modern clergymen salvation and socialism are virtually synonymous.

The remarkable similarity between the late Medieval vision of Christ and its 21st Century counterpart arises because in many respects they were very similar times – times of revolution. Just as the great prophet of modern Marxism-Leninism was Joseph Stalin, a former seminarian, so the leaders of the medieval peasants' revolts

were clergymen. It was an English priest named John Ball, who wrote a piece of doggerel that became the anthem of the medieval peasant revolutionaries from one end of Europe to the other: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"

Translated into German, for example, it became: "*Vann Adam grab und Eve span, woher war dann der Edelmann?*"

By contrast, the vision of Jesus Christ presented by the Church both in the mid First Millennium and the late Renaissance was entirely different. Their's was an image of Christ the Supreme Ruler of Creation.

Their's, of course, were also times when monarchies were utterly confident and politically secure. Indeed, under the patronage of the Renaissance princes, the Feast of Christ the King reached the zenith of its popularity, while

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 at (410) 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Ethel, Priscilla,, Peter, Charlotte, Bryan, Dorothy, Rodney, 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, Elizabeth, Wade, Sifa, Theresa, Lisa, Larry, Jail & Scott

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Caroline, Mavis, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Cindy, Jacob, Casey, Beth, Erin, Aubery & Kath

IN MEMORIAM: Selwyn

FOR THOSE WHO MOURN: Dr. Hollis Seunarine and family.

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.

the image of Christ the King of All Creation greatly contributed to the formulation of the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings . . .

But where among all these images does the truth lie?

This is a question that has fascinated and preoccupied Christian scholars – almost to the exclusion of almost all else – for more than century. It is an on-going intellectual investigation that has taken its name from a book on the subject written by the late Dr. Albert Schweitzer: "*The Quest for the Historical Jesus.*"

Actually, the historical Jesus is not too difficult to find. He is ever present in the Gospels. But we shouldn't be altogether shocked that the genuine Jesus of the Gospels

satisfies neither academic theologians nor the ecclesiastical politicians.

The Jesus we meet in the Gospels is extraordinary for the ordinariness of the circumstances into which he was born – neither noble nor helot, neither rich nor poor, but squarely middle class. His family, for example, owned a donkey, the First Century A.D.’s equivalent of today’s family Chevy.

Joseph, his adopted father, worked at a profitable and easily transportable trade. Carpenters in the Holy Land were also building contractors and developers.

Joseph’s commercial acumen is apparent in the choice of the Holy Family’s place of exile, Egypt. Skilled building contractors were constant demand in Alexandria, the city with the largest Jewish population in the civilized world.

Their return to Galilee was also a shrewd business move. Galilee, at the time, was in the midst of a building boom and Nazareth was the very center of it. Tourists today explore the ruins of Sepphoris, an architectural jewel, close by the Holy Family’s hometown.

The small city was under construction at the time at the time of the Holy Family’s return, and it is to remarkable to

think that one might be able to gaze upon stones handled by St. Joseph or even our Savior, himself.

The fact of the matter is that the Jesus of the Gospels, the real historical Jesus, cannot be comfortably squeezed into any earthly human mold – king, poor peasant or revolutionary. He is unique. But shouldn’t we expect the Son of God to be exactly that? GPH✕

Church lawn care update

The church lawnmower volunteers thank all for the many compliments about our church’s neat lawn. The Church also thanks the mowers for their efforts to keep The Lord’s yard attractive. The mowers are a dedicated team seeing that the lawn tractor runs each week to keep things trim. And, the mower folks are not stingy and are willing to share the fun of operating the new tractor. Anyone interested in joining the group, gal or guy, is invited to call for information. Some workers have recently offered to trim as well as mow and we now have set up and charged our great DeWalt battery trimmer ready to run.

The lawn bunch welcomes all help.

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

The Ven. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*

The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar* ·

Associate Rectors:

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki,

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, The Rev. Robert Ludwig. &

The Rev. Dr. Norman Flowers

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

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

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

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

Choral Services (as announced) – evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Monday, 6.30 pm: Bridge Club

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Noon: Bible Study

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

The Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, September 19th, 7.00 pm

Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, September 19th at 12.00 PM

Reservations: Call Sara Douglas at 410-560-9026

Weekly Summer Suppers

Wednesdays. 6.30 PM

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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