

# St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH • TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

## A vital life lesson from a Roman soap opera

Television has never come high among my priorities. Truth to tell, I have never developed the habit of watching much other than the news. This is possibly a consequence of several years of working behind what used to be called the Iron Curtain – a place where television programs were as dull as the architecture. One, I contend, can tolerate only a limited number many documentaries films about coal mining in the Dnieper Valley before going stark, raving bonkers!

To be fair, Charlotte and I became serious fans of German police procedurals – they are really top notch. Back in the States, we could never get used to watching Kojack in English; we much preferred his German persona. The German dubbed version of Columbo, by contrast, never rang true. There's no substitute, it seems, for Peter Falk's voice and delivery.

In recent years, however, Charlotte – never an admirer of American network TV – has taken to watch endless British reruns on PBS television. And, as I enjoy her company, I've taken to watching them with her. Entertainmentwise, they are, of course, a tremendous advance on coal mining in the Dnieper Valley. But I have seen so many repeats of "Are You being Served" and "As Time Goes By" I can now mouth most of the lines along with the cast.

I complained about this to my daughter Elizabeth. "Why don't you subscribe to Netflix?" she asked, "Then you can both watch something new."

Much of the stuff Netflix offer is the routine mixture sex, sadism and occasional doses of snobbery Hollywood regurgitates these days. But there are also plenty of good quality programs available – the British series "Rome," for example. "Rome" 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.

Elizabeth presented me with the DVD set of the series when it first came out. She knew I was interested in the subject and that the script was historically quite accurate. It caused her some surprise, however, to discover that in addition to graphic violence, – as in many British-made TV productions – it also contained explicit sex.

But that, of course, 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.

Rome's traditional civic virtue had broken down. Honor and morality had been shucked off. 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.

Caesar didn't actually overthrow republican government. He simply rode the tide of chaos to assume power. Two brutal civil wars later, his nephew and heir, Octavian (deified as Augustus), laid the foundations of the imperial system.

Some might describe "Rome" as "The Godfather" or "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. Our governmental and legal systems are similar – 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.

In one vitally important respect, however, we are very different from them. And the difference arises from the fact that, unlike us, Rome had not been influenced by Christianity.

### Parish Prayer List

Our Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and 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.

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**FOR RECOVERY:** Gene, 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

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

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**IN MEMORIAM:**

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**FOR THOSE WHO MOURN:**

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**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.

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. Chattel slavery reached into all areas of Roman life. Even the poorest of homes had a slave. They were the Romans' household appliances, and industrial machines. Paradoxically, however, 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. At the height of the old Republic 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.

Christianity's divinely inspired virtues have proved immeasurably more powerful than the virtues engendered by Rome's ancient form of secular humanism.

Over the past two millennia Christian virtues have transformed the West – enshrining love for humanity, manifest in a respect for human right, as the over-arching virtue. And this, in turn, has ushered in an era of democracy. The vital lesson to be taken from this important television series is that America abandons Christianity and the virtues it imparts at its peril. GPH✳

## Meditation on the Lord's Prayer

Some prayers flow like water. They roll from your very soul because they are so well thought out by their authors. Of course, the very best author of prayer is God Almighty in the person of Jesus Christ!

The Lord's Prayer is so beautiful in its simplicity and directness. It tells us of God's love, and what we must do to get it. While no fault can be found with or in it, there is a fault in us regarding its use. We say it so very often (which is good) that we do it by rote and pay no attention to it (which is bad).

*Thy will be done.* God's will, not ours. We must all learn to submit to God's will. After all, Christ submitted himself to die a terrible death for our sins. It would seem the least we could do to accept that he knows what is better for us than we do for ourselves.

*Give us this day our daily bread.* This day, not tomorrow, not next week, and Christ reiterates the importance of this plea right after telling us how to pray in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:34. Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. We must have faith in our submission to God that He *will* take care of us.

*Forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us.* The capitalization of the letter "A" in the text from the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* is intended as an aid for communal reading. It indicates a pause. But I think the capitalization of "as" is important for another reason:

Jesus tells us repeatedly that if we want to receive forgiveness from God and to fully receive his love, we need to forgive our fellow men.

Being frail human beings, we often tend to rattle off the Lord's Prayer quickly and without thought. It is important to strive to change this. We need the faith to know that God will give us exactly what we need – albeit not necessarily what we ask for. ROBERT LUDWIG✳

## 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 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](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

**Thursday, 10am:** Knitting Circle

Noon: Bible Study

**Friday, 10.30am:** Bible Study

### MONTHLY & SPECIAL

## The Vestry Meeting

*Wednesday, October 17th, 7.00 pm*

## Ladies Who Lunch

*Wednesday, October 17th. 7.00 PM*

*Reservations: Call Sara Douglas at 410-560-9026*

## Cookie Walk 2018

*Saturday, December 1st from 9.00 AM to 12 noon*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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