

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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FROM THE RECTOR

Pardon me, but our (really bad) manners are showing

One of my mother's favorite sayings was: "Good manners cost nothing." Cheap though good manners might be they are a commodity sadly lacking in America today. – a great pity because they are the lubricant that keeps society civilized and running smoothly.

The truth of this was brought home to me, literally quite forcefully, when we lived in New York more than 30 years ago – a time when occasionally it was my privilege (if that is the appropriate word) to ride the Long Island Rail Road.

One day, I happened to be strolling along Manhattan's 34th Street headed to Pennsylvania Station. Ahead of me was a young man, looking down as is the custom of Manhattanites to avoid the trash on the sidewalk, charging along in typical New York fashion.

Coming towards us was a young couple, similarly oblivious to their surroundings as the chap in front of me. A collision was inevitable and, sure enough, it was the young woman who bore the brunt of the impact.

Next thing, the two young guys were rolling on the pavement, cursing and swearing, exchanging blows like prize fighters.

I was a lot younger, three inches taller, much fitter and no less foolhardy. I bent down, pulled the combatants apart and explained: "It was an accident. He didn't mean to do it. I sure he's sorry for bumping into your girlfriend. Isn't that so?"

"Yeah, father," said the chap who did the bumping, looking puzzled.

"Well tell her you're sorry," I said.

"Sorry, miss," he said, sheepishly.

I made the three shake hands and sent them on their way. No harm was done, but the fact of the matter was that if I had not been there somebody might have been seriously hurt – and simply a total lack of manners.

The three were not ill-educated peasants. They were the products of middle class America, and, judging by the way they were dressed, college graduates who probably worked on Wall Street. The only thing jarring about them was their basic lack of manners.

Things have not improved since the 1980s. Indeed, judging by behavior on display in all area of the country over the past few years manners have declined even further – something that should come as no surprise seeing that they are rarely enforced, at school.

It was my grandfather's theory that, in Britain at least, the decline in standards of personal conduct can be dated to the time municipal councils began rewording the signs on public rest rooms – replacing the traditional "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" with the more politically correct "men" and "women."

Up to that time, most people subscribed to the notion that children should be raised in such a manner that they would not have to enter public rest rooms on false pretences. Little girls were expected to be "ladies" and small boys "gentlemen."

The status of "lady" or "gentleman" was not conferred by birth: you either became one – or you didn't.

At the age of 10 or so, for example, the masters at my prep school worked hard at ironing out my East Anglian diphthongs, -- making me say "I" instead of "oy" and

"my" instead of "moy" – in an effort to make me "speak like a gentleman." Eventually, they succeeded.

But folks back home were not notably impressed. "Handsome is as handsome does" was the watchword. The measure of people's worth was not how they spoke, but how they behaved.

Back in those days, small boys took their reputations very seriously. We weren't goody-goodies. To the contrary. But we lived by a code of conduct which required us to act like gentlemen. Friendships, for example, were not made lightly, and it was a matter of the deepest dishonor to turn one's back on a friend.

It was not an option to lie your way out of trouble. If you were rightly accused of a transgression, you admitted the crime forthrightly and took your punishment without complaint.

If somebody was about to be punished for something you'd done, you were morally obligated to own up. To allow somebody else to suffer for a thing you had done

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 visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office (410) 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Catherine, Richard✘, Janis, Parisa, Daniel, Judy, Leona, Charlotte, Rachel, Elizabeth, Kim, Dorothy, Donna, Skip, Dan. Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Heidi, Alan, Terry, Helen, Linda, John, Neal, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Jan, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Marie, Jim, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John Tom, Michell, Jack, Lewey, Stephen, Pamela, David, Wade, Sifa, Eileen, Ravi, Theresa, Lisa, Larry Ricard & Scott

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Caroline, Karen, Ardis, Mavis, Michael, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Chip, Elizabeth, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Jacob, Casey, Beth, Kath, Rebecca, Colin, Christian, Catherine & Elizabeth

IN MEMORIAM:

THOSE WHO MOURN:

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Col. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; USAF; Cpt Fiodor Strikovski, US Army.

was unthinkable.

It was beneath contempt to fight unfairly – to kick, bite gouged or hit others when they were off guard. You never fought anybody smaller or weaker than yourself, no matter how gravely they might have insulted you. And you never – and I mean never – continued fighting when somebody asked for quarter.

If you knocked your opponent down you helped him to his feet. Fists were the only acceptable weapon. You never hurled a stone or a stick. And it was your absolute duty to help and protect girls as well as any boys people smaller or weaker than yourself.

The ultimate indication of one's worth, however, was the reliance that could be placed on one's word. When you gave your word, you kept it – no matter how dire the consequences might be. And you never cheated at little things, like cards, because if you couldn't be trusted in small things, who would trust you in truly important matters?

Adults lived by the same rules. Phrases like "women and children first" and "my word is my bond" were not mere high-flown rhetoric. The history of the two World

Wars and countless civil tragedies, such as the sinking of the Titanic, provide ample evidence that these principles were taken seriously.

They were also a fundamental principle in the realm of commerce. A London insurance broker at Lloyds, for example, after the institution's close of business, sought to obtain coverage for the interior fittings of ocean liner that was already at sea.

The only person manning the desk at the marine syndicate with which he usually did business was a junior underwriter, a recent promoted office boy, who was rushing off to catch a train home. "I'll sign the contract in the morning," said the young man, "I can't do it now it's after the close of business."

That night the liner, the Andrea Doria, sank, and the syndicate paid out claims amounting several million dollars on the word of their junior employee.

Folks these days are often surprised that this casual contract was honored without demur. But for them it would have been unthinkable to have done otherwise.

The young underwriter had done what he was supposed to do. He had pledged the syndicate's word. It was unthinkable that they would have reneged.

Indeed, if they had failed to honor the commitment, nobody would have trusted them again.

Today such notions seem hopelessly antique. Today, corporate lawyers are employed to write loopholes into contracts nobody intends to honor. And today's brides-to-be hire attorneys to draw up prenuptial agreements defining the legal limits of loving, honoring and cherishing – for how long, and for how much.

But concepts such as honor and courtesy aren't yet antique. They were still the norm 70 years ago -- all of which gives you an idea of how far we've sunk – and how fast.

We might be materially richer today than we were seven decades ago, but in all other respects we are the poorer. Are we really any happier than we were when the highest personal compliment of all was to be described as a good Christian lady or gentleman? GPH✕

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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www.ststeve.com

The Very Rev. Guy P Hawtin, Dean & Rector

The Rev. John Novicki, Vicar ·

Associate Rectors:

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. C. Daniel Bursi,

The Rev. Dr. Norman Flowers,

The Rev. M. Wiley Hawks & The Rev. Mark Newsome,

Mrs Happy Riley, Director of Pastoral Care

& Wedding Coordinator

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

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

11am: Sung 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, 6.30pm: Bridge Club

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Noon: Bible Study

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

5.00 PM to 7.30 PM, Tuesday, February 25th

Housey Housey (Anglican Bingo)

Friday February 28th, 6.30 PM, in the Parish Hall

The Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, 7.00 PM, March 18th

Ladies Who Lunch

Noon, Wednesday, March 18th

Venue: To be announced

Information: Call Sara Douglas at 410-560-9026

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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