

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

in

ASHEVILLE

by
Father Gale Webbe

Charlotte Street at Macon Avenue

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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AT St. Mary's Parish we center our lives on the fundamental realities of the Christian religion. With us it is not "High Church ceremonial" that is the important thing, but the fact of God and His relationship with men.

Quite simply, at St. Mary's we know that we need God. Apart from Him, we are nothing. No amount of worldly position, education, wealth, or self-sufficient moral effort can bring us to God and give a meaning to our existence. That is, we are in precisely the same human quandary as everyone else—except that we believe that God took human flesh, died on the cross, and rose from the dead for our salvation. And then, instead of leaving the world at His ascension, God remained in it in His spiritual Body the Church. In this Body He continues to live in the world, and we may find Him at St. Mary's. Our "High Churchmanship" simply means that we take this high view of the Church. We believe that the Church is the Body

of Christ in the world today—Christ intimately in contact with our daily lives—and so we love and follow the Church as we would love and follow Jesus Himself.

We believe that we are grafted into the Church at our baptism, and as we share in the life of this Body we are sharers in the divine-human life of Christ. And our living as part of the Body of Christ is not just a matter of being inspired or uplifted or encouraged or exhorted by moralists. It is an actual sharing in God's own life—and God has appointed guaranteed means by which we can do this. These divinely ordained means are called Sacraments.

In order to understand religion as it is practiced at St. Mary's it is necessary, then, to understand these two ideas of "The Church" and "The Sacraments".

The Church

THE CHURCH, the Body of Christ, is One. It includes all baptised people, and is centered around an unbroken line of Apostles (called Bishops) extending back across the ages to Christ Himself, who commissioned them. We think of ourselves as part of this one world-wide Apostolic Body, which is called the Holy Catholic Church. The Episcopal Church is not a separated little exclusive club of nice people following the religious ideas of some man. As Episcopalians we are not members just of a small organization of some 3,000,000 Americans; we are members of a universal Apostolic Body of over one billion of all nationalities. Thus we try to avoid peculiarities, national or otherwise, in doctrine, discipline and worship, and remember always our membership in the one whole Church.

Unfortunately it must be stressed that by the One Church or the Holy Catholic Church, we are not referring to the Roman Church. We recognize Rome as a part of the Catholic Church—but not as all of it. The English and American and Eastern Orthodox branches of the Church are just as validly and genuinely Catholic as the Roman or Italian branch of it. The Episcopal and the Orthodox and the Roman Churches are all parts of the one Body of Christ, and thus have most things in common, but there is no administrative connection between them, for each is self-governing. Incidentally, the validity of the Episcopal Church as a genuine part of the Catholic Church is recognized

by the other non-Roman parts of the Church—the ancient Orthodox Churches of the east and the Old Catholic Churches. In short, Anglo-Catholics (for so we call ourselves) do not “go all the way” into the Roman Church, for the good reason that we are already “all the way” into the Catholic Church.

Further on this subject, Anglo-Catholics do not imitate the Roman Church. The faith and worship of The Church belong equally to all parts of the Catholic Church. As a part of the Catholic Church, the Church’s historic heritage is as much ours as it is Rome’s. At St. Mary’s we do not do things just because the Romanists do them, nor do we avoid things because the Romanists use them. We simply believe, worship and live as Christians in general all over the world have believed, worshipped and lived since the time of Christ Himself. Our practices are determined neither positively nor negatively by Rome. They are determined by human needs, and by the Church’s inspired wisdom which, over the centuries, devised means to meet these needs.

We do not, however, accept the following Roman additions to the original Catholic religion: The supremacy and infallibility of the Bishop of Rome (the pope); compulsory confession; compulsory priestly celibacy.

The Sacraments

GOD, knowing that we human beings with our finite minds cannot apprehend and understand spiritual realities, came into the world in a physical form that we could understand. Furthermore, He is still in the world conveying spiritual realities to us through physical things that we can taste and touch and handle. As one uses these physical things—called "sacraments"—he receives spiritual realities and shares in the Incarnate Life of God. A sacrament, then, has two realities—material, and spiritual. Historic Christianity, because it extends from the God Who took flesh, is in its very nature a sacramental religion. A non-sacramental or sacrament-neglecting "Christianity" is less than Christianity.

Because we believe this at St. Mary's, our faith is not built upon preaching or music or ceremonial; it is built upon union with God by means of the sacraments God has provided for us. We go to church to receive the sacraments, knowing that when we do so we receive God.

There are two sacraments generally necessary for salvation—Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. There are five others which should be used when needed and applicable—Holy Penance, Holy Confirmation, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Orders. The ones used most frequently are, of course, Holy Communion, by which, day after day or week after week, we feed upon the vital strength of God; Holy Penance, by which we have a guaranteed way of getting the barrier of

sin between God and us removed, whenever that barrier brings about an estrangement from God; and Holy Unction (anointing the sick with oil) by which God's grace heals us from sickness.

Our Ceremonial

THIS sense of the importance of the sacraments and of our membership in the whole Body of Christ is characteristic of us who are called Anglo-Catholics or, sometimes, "High Churchmen." It is not correct to identify Anglo-Catholicism or High Churchmanship with ceremonialism, for some of the most rigid ceremonialists are Low Churchmen, who hold most uncompromisingly to their own way of doing things. Yet since our ceremonial is the first thing that meets the eye, it is necessary to discuss the subject briefly.

A ceremony is simply a way of doing something. Inasmuch as we are a part of the worldwide, universal Christendom, we use in our services the traditional ceremonial used by the great majority of Christians all over the world and throughout the ages. Certain additions or interpolations are made to the Prayer Book order for Holy Communion. These additions come from ancient and universal Christian usage. The Prayer Book is the minimum required by the Church. We conform to all the Church requires, and supplement it with additional liturgical treasures.

Ceremonial is not play-acting. It is a natural expression of man's devotions. A man does not merely say to his wife, "I love you." He also embraces her. We do not merely say to God, "We worship Thee". We also bow the knee in reverence to the Word-made-flesh. Ceremonial is worshipping God with actions as well as with words, and thus it is a step closer to worshipping Him in

daily life than mere "word worship" is.

Ceremonial is *expressive*. We try to avoid any ceremonial which is simply *impressive* or dramatic; all our ceremonial is expressive of our love for God and of our recognition of His supreme worth. The ceremonial we use grew up naturally in the course of Christian history and has been found by millions of men through many centuries to be expressive of their love for God. Some of it will be unfamiliar to one who sees it for the first time. It is fairly easily learned, however, and is well worth learning because of its enormous teaching value. For, as a by-product of its primary purpose—the worship of God—it is excellent "visual education" about God. The Rector, or any member of St. Mary's, will be glad to explain how a particular ceremony or symbol helps make the Christian life clearer and realer.

Freedom of Worship

AT St. Mary's we believe in freedom of worship. Any ceremonial or act of devotion is performed voluntarily by the individual. If you do not wish to genuflect or sign the cross, that is nobody's business but your own. However, in order that *all* may enjoy freedom of worship, we provide, insofar as we are able, facilities for devotions which one is free to use or ignore as he pleases. We provide votive candles, holy water, Stations of the Cross, etc., for if we did not, those who wish to use them would not be free to do so. We would be compelling people not to use them. If the Sacrament of Penance were not offered in this parish, then one would not have freedom to make a sacramental confession if he wishes to do so. Compulsion in the details of worship is wrong, whether (as in the Roman Church) one is compelled to make a sacramental confession, or whether (as in a parish that does not offer the Sacrament of Penance) one is compelled to abstain from sacramental confession.

In short, at St. Mary's we have the widest possible assortment of time-tested devotional aids, so that all people may find help on their journey Godward. Indeed, herein is one of the great glories and satisfactions of "High Churchmanship"—that from the rich, complete treasury of its devotional scheme it can supply elements that meet all the spiritual needs of every man. We welcome questions about the meaning, use and value of anything that is unfamiliar.

A Word to Visitors

YOU are always welcome at St. Mary's. We are glad to have you with us. Feel free to avail yourself of the privileges offered by this parish. Our schedule of services is given below—come as often as you wish. If you desire to transfer your membership to this parish, the Rector will be glad to help you arrange this. If you do not wish to transfer, you are still welcome here as often as you care to come.

If you have not been Confirmed, the Rector will be glad to arrange for Confirmation instructions. You place yourself under no obligation by taking instruction — you decide, *after* the instruction, whether or not you wish to be Confirmed. The Prayer Book does not require Confirmation before coming to Communion. Confirmation, however, is available to everyone.

The parish mails a bulletin each month. We shall be glad to put you on our mailing list, if you will give us your name and address.

The church is always open for prayer and meditation, and the Blessed Sacrament is always Reserved on the altar. Come in any time and visit with our Blessed Lord.

The Rector will be glad to talk over with you any matter you wish to discuss. He can be seen after any service, or at any time by appointment.

REGULAR SERVICES

MASSES

Sunday ----- 8:00 AM and 11:00 AM
Tuesday - Saturday ----- 5:30 PM
(Holy Days of Obligation, additional
Mass - 10:00 AM)

DAILY OFFICE

Sunday ----- 7:45 AM
(15 minutes prior to weekday Masses)

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sunday ----- 10:00 AM
(Adult Forum, Church School and Nursery)

CONFESSIONS

Saturday ----- 4:00 PM
(and by appointment)

HOLY UNCTION

Thursday ----- 5:30 PM
(and by appointment)

SOLEMN EVENSONG AND BENEDICTION

First Sunday ----- 5:30 PM

Fundamentals of Catholicism

THE following have been set forth as fundamental points of Catholicism by F. C. Lightbourn in THE HOLY CROSS MAGAZINE:

"1. *The supremacy of God.* It is from this that all of the other doctrines derive. For Catholics—Roman, Eastern, and Anglican—God is something more than an abstraction. There are inner relations within the Godhead, a distinction of Selves, of Persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. God is dependent on nothing but Himself; man is dependent for everything upon God.

"2. *The Incarnation.* Catholic Christians are those who take the Incarnation seriously—who accept it not only as an event in the past, but as an ever-present reality. God becomes man—brings His own Life into personal union with human life. Jesus Christ is God and man—just as truly one as the other.

"3. *Catholics regard the Incarnation as an ever-present reality.* It is here that they part company—at least in practice—with non-Catholics. God, we believe, became man to bring a new power into human life—the power of the Divine Life Itself—and also to teach men more fully the will of God. Now for God to be perfectly human, His life on earth could not be longer than the average human life. Yet there would have been little point in confining the benefits of the Incarnation to one generation of men. So, at His ascension, Christ left behind Him a group of followers, men and

women, whom He had called to help Him in His work and continue that work in His Name. This group is known as The Church, Christ's Mystical Body—a group which through its spiritual but very real connection with Him still carries on His work in the world. The life-giving power which He mediated 2000 years ago in the flesh is still mediated through the Church. The teaching that He gave is authoritatively interpreted and applied by His Mystical Body the Church. The Church is thus the extension of the Incarnation — the means by which the Incarnate Lord is brought to bear upon the entire world to the end of time.

"The power of the Incarnate Life is given to the individual through the Sacraments. Creatures of flesh and blood as we are, God chooses to meet us on our own level. Hence, in giving us the help that is from above, He does so through outward and visible signs.

"In the Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist (sometimes in accord with ancient usage, called the Mass) Christ Himself, under the outward forms of bread and wine, comes to the individual soul as spiritual food. Catholic Christians (whether Roman, Eastern, or Anglican) believe that the Risen and Ascended Christ is verily and indeed Present in the Sacred Elements themselves, not just in the hearts of those who receive them worthily. Catholic Christians regard the Holy Communion as the normal Sunday obligation and privilege, as the highest act of all worship. In accord with this basic idea, they believe in surrounding it with as much dignity and beauty as possible.

"4. *The Disciplinary System.* The Prayer Book

contains a list of fast days and days of abstinence, of self-denial. The common practice is to reduce the quantity of food taken on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, thereby approximating a strict fast; also to abstain from meat on all Fridays of the year except in festival time. There are other forms of self-denial undertaken voluntarily. Discipline is also exercised through the Confessional, of which the true Catholic makes use from time to time."