

## SERMON 898

November 23, 2014

The Feast of Christ the King

Last Sunday after Pentecost

973rd Week as Priest

800th Week at St Dunstan's

65th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

## THANKSGIVING

*Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

### Rosemary

“Thanksgiving,” says Rosemary, my ninety-six year old parishioner, every Wednesday at the Prayers for Healing. We have a Holy Eucharist for about a dozen people, mostly retired faculty and friends, just after all the clocks in Auburn chime the noon hour, and Samford Hall plays the fight song. In another two or three minutes, the weather warning siren goes off, and we begin the service. We use the Rite One liturgy, which is about eighty percent lifted straight from the 1928 Prayer Book, and we have Prayers for Healing.

This began as an experiment almost four years ago, for the Season of Lent, and now the Wednesday service has become such a major part of our week that I tell them we will stop when the Lord comes again.

Rosemary and her husband of 64 years suggested we give it a try. Julian was a zoology professor at Auburn for more than four decades and literally wrote the book on birdwatching, and another book titled Mammals of Alabama, which was published after his death. Rosemary and Julian came to Auburn from Ohio State University in 1957 on a one-year appointment. They decided to stay, and I will go out on a limb and say that the Episcopal Church in Auburn had a lot to do with their long tenure in the Loveliest Village.

Rosemary and Julian were inseparable. She accompanied him on his research trips and field studies for forty years. She ran the household and the finances. She did the taxes and paid the bills. But she was a pretty terrible cook, so they ate out a lot. And that was just fine, because they loved eating out, and being together, and going to church. When Julian died, Rosemary was stunned, and lost, and completely perplexed about what her life would be without Julian. They had no children, no family, but she had the church, and the church is what saved her.

“Thanksgiving,” she says. And we give God thanks for the grace and goodness of her life, for her marriage to a good man, for her continued health, and for the church. The church, you see, is what sustains her, lifts her up, and gives her the strength and courage to get up and do what needs to be done. Thanksgiving. It’s a way of living that I think we all could adopt, and continue to follow for the rest of our lives.

### **Eric and Chelsea**

This weekend, Leigh and I drove to Mobile, Alabama, for the ordination of six new deacons in God’s one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. One of those new deacons came to St. Dunstan’s as a member of our student choir in 2003. It seemed to me that Eric Mancil fell in love with the Episcopal Church and the girl who brought him at the same time. I baptized Eric the following September, and the girlfriend, Chelsea, was his sponsor. I presented them both for Confirmation in the spring. And soon after they graduated from Auburn, I celebrated and blessed the marriage of Eric and Chelsea at St. Dunstan’s. When their children, Sophie and Jude, were born, I baptized them. I shepherded Eric through the ordination process, and for the past three years we have been praying for him in the Prayers of the People

while they have been at Virginia Seminary. Yesterday, I presented Eric for ordination to the Bishop of the Central Gulf Coast.

And what I felt was Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for students, for young people who love the church. Thanksgiving for baptism and confirmation and marriage. Thanksgiving for bishops who send young men and women off to seminary. And thanksgiving for the congregations who support them, and pray for them, and call them to serve when they come home.

## **Epiphany Church**

I am very thankful for the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, and St. Dunstan's, and for all of the parish churches and campus ministries in the Diocese of Alabama. I am grateful for Beans & Rice in Tallassee, and for all of you who serve as lay readers, altar guild members, Daughters of the King, lay Eucharistic ministers, stewards and cooks and ushers and web site managers and vestry members. I am thankful for the great work you do taking care of our church building and grounds, and I am overwhelmed by the kindness and love that you show for friends and strangers alike. I know how important the Episcopal Church is to you, and I am honored and happy to be a part of your Episcopal Church—which is this Christian community, and the

22,000 members of the Diocese of Alabama, and the 1.8 million members of the Episcopal Church USA, and the 73 million members of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

## **Christ the King**

There are a thousand thousand things to be thankful for today—and we are mindful of our many blessings—what Bishop Parsley used to call “grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing.” But we are most thankful for Christ the King, the Lord of All Creation, the One who came to us to save us from sin and death. It is he who is the Alpha and Omega, the One who was crucified and raised from the dead, he who will come again. And that, dear friends, will be a day of Great Thanksgiving. AMEN.

937 words

(At the last minute, actually during the reading of the Gospel lesson, I decided to lead a Holy Conversation on our “Favorite Names for Jesus.”)