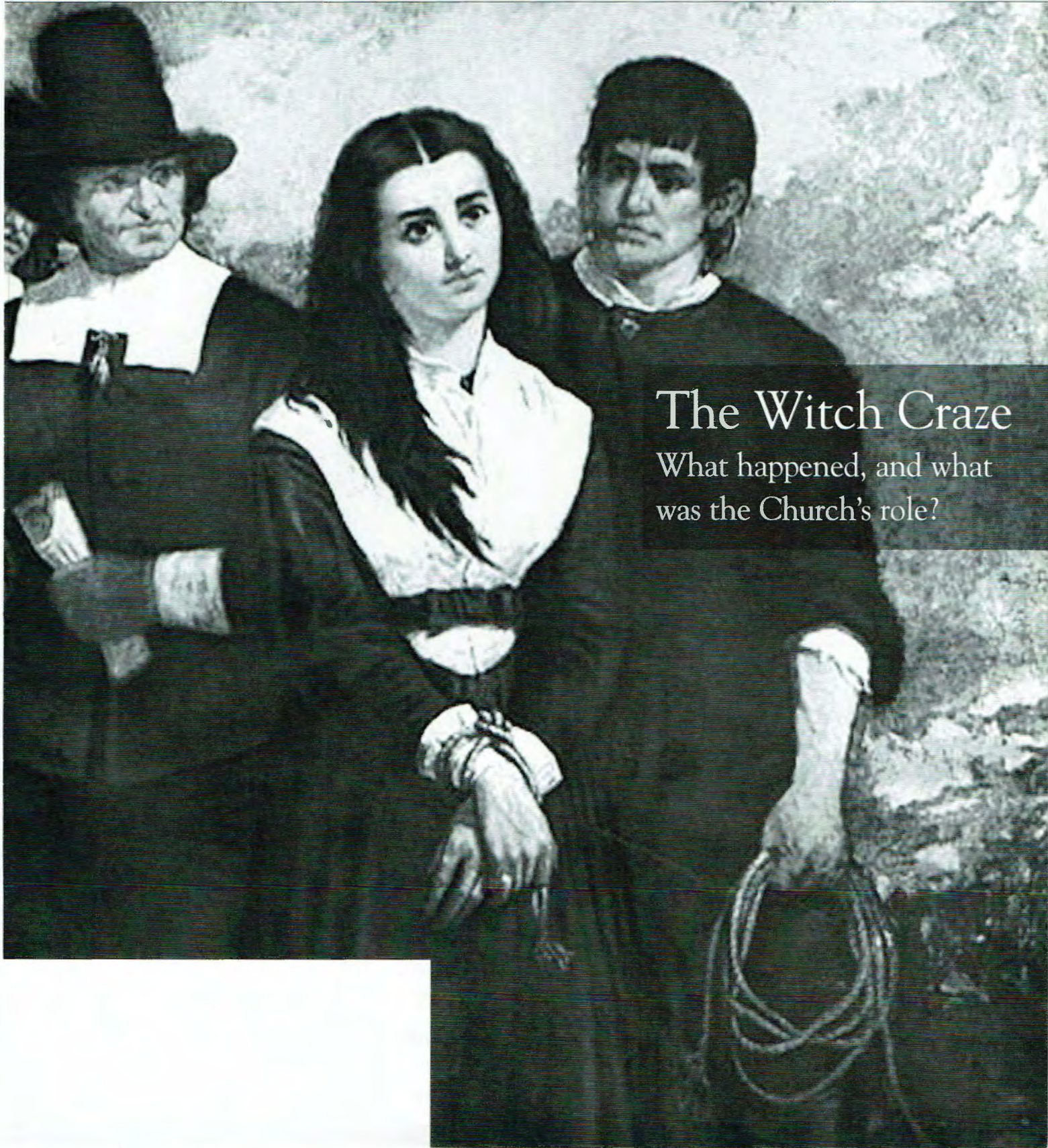


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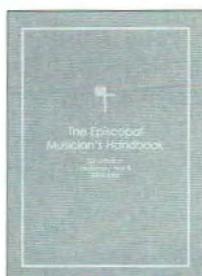
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Volume 239

Number 17

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The Salem Martyr, oil painting by Thomas Slatterwhite Noble, 1869.

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SUNDAY'S READINGS

Answer Not Obvious

"What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51)

The 21st Sunday After Pentecost (Proper 25B), Oct. 25, 2009

BCP: Isaiah 59:(1-4)9-19; Psalm 13; Heb. 5:12-6:1,9-12; Mark 10:46-52

RCL: Job 42:1-6,10-17 and Psalm 34:1-8(19-22) or Jer. 31:7-9 and Psalm 126; Heb. 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

In today's gospel, a blind man, Bartimaeus, is sitting by the roadside on the outskirts of Jericho when Jesus and a crowd pass by. As soon as Bartimaeus learns that it is Jesus, he cries out to him. He pays no attention when some sternly order him to shut up, but rather cries out all the louder.

When Jesus hears his cry, he invites the man to approach him. The crowd now encourages Bartimaeus. When he is in front of Jesus, Jesus asks him what he wants. Bartimaeus asks for his sight, receives it, and then follows Jesus as he continues on his way.

While Bartimaeus's story is quickly told, some details in the account are noteworthy. His appeal is a form of the Jesus Prayer, described as a summary of the entire gospel in one sentence: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Bartimaeus's cry from the roadside is not for his sight, which is what he wants most, but for mercy, which is what he needs most.

Though it is obvious Bartimaeus is blind, Jesus prods him to ask specifically for that favor as the expression of the mercy for which he had cried out. And the crowd's resistance to Bartimaeus's cry, and then its encourage-

ment when Jesus calls for him, are almost irrelevant.

Especially noteworthy are the themes of the "companion" lessons from the Old Testament, for they are quite different yet equally applicable. One gives us punishment for sin and the other deliverance from sin's consequences.

The lesson from Isaiah in the BCP lectionary points out that moral "blindness" results in great suffering for those who resist the clear will of God, with eventual divine judgment enacted against them. The lesson from Jeremiah in the RCL has the theme of deliverance from exile for "the remnant of Israel." Putting this lesson in its historical context, the people of Israel had been sent into exile for their habitual sins and stubborn refusal to obey the will of God; deliverance is now at hand, but only for the faithful "remnant." Even in exile there were many who persevered in their wickedness, and these are lost to Israel forever.

Jesus' question to Bartimaeus, then — "What do you want me to do for you?" — is not an idle question at all. All knew the will of God; the question is what the faithful want to do about it.

Look It Up

Consider the lesson from Hebrews. The writer exhorts the readers of his letter to a certain course, though the lesson begins by noting that they have failed to pass beyond the stage of Christian "infancy." To what does he call them? How does this call match the theme of the other lessons for today?

Think About It

What in your life puts you in the position of knowing God's will, yet not wanting to do it? In such a situation, what do you really want?

Next Sunday

All Saints' Day, Nov. 1, 2009

BCP: Eccles. 44:1-10,13-14; Psalm 149; Rev. 7:2-4,9-17; Matt. 5:1-12 or Eccles. 2:(1-6)7-11; Psalm 149; Eph. 1:(11-14)15-23; Luke 6:20-26(27-36)

RCL: Wisdom 3:1-9 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 24; Rev. 21:1-6a; John 11:32-44

Pittsburgh Offers Release to Clergy Who Departed TEC

The standing committee of the Episcopal Church's Diocese of Pittsburgh has issued a letter that offers to release former clergy of the diocese without deposing them.

"It has now been a year since the 143rd Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh," the standing committee said in the letter, which it made public. "At the conclusion of that convention, 'letters of transfer' to the Province of the Southern Cone were issued to every member of the clergy. It is our understanding that some have understood themselves to have accepted these 'transfers.'"

The Episcopal Church's diocese, however, still counts these clergy on its rolls. "We are seeking to remedy this in a way that does not involve deposition," the standing committee said.

More than 100 priests and deacons transferred to the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone. They are now poised to become clergy of the Angli-

can Church in North America, which is led by the Rt. Rev. Robert W. Duncan, the seventh Bishop of Pittsburgh, who has been deposed as a bishop of the Episcopal Church. ACNA leaders have said repeatedly that they intend to seek ACNA's recognition as a province of the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Duncan refers to the clergy and people who left with him as the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, and its diocesan website adds (Anglican) as a suffix. The non-separating diocese identifies itself as "the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church in the United States."

The letter refers to Canon III.9.8 but does not cite it by title: "Renunciation of the Ordained Ministry." That lan-

guage has proven a stumbling point, in recent years, as other priests have received occasional offers for release without deposition. The canon applies to any priest who wants to resign from the Episcopal Church's holy orders, "acting voluntarily and for causes, assigned or known, which do not affect the priest's moral character." The canon's wording sometimes has left priests uncertain of whether they are being asked to renounce only their ministry within the Episcopal Church or their future ministry as priests.

The standing committee's letter makes the diocese's intentions more explicit.

"This does not affect your ordination, which you may register with whatever entity you choose. This is simply a way for us to gain clarity around the issue of who is licensed to practice ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church," the standing committee said. "Please know that this release can be reversed in the future if you so choose but that the Diocese of Pittsburgh hopes that all of you will decide to remain with us."

The standing committee asks clergy to respond by Oct. 19.

"We're doing this for pastoral reasons," said the Rev. James Simons, president of the standing committee. "We do not want to see our priestly brothers and sisters deposed."

The Rt. Rev. Kenneth Price, who has been nominated to become the diocese's provisional bishop, supports the standing committee's decision.

"As the standing committee worked through this necessary action, I was painfully aware that they were not just talking about a list of clergy, but friends of long standing," he said. "For this reason I am grateful the canons provide this 'softer' method of allowing those who wish to depart from the Episcopal Church to do so legally without us making a judgment on their ordination."



Fr. Simons



Bishop Duncan

Judge's Ruling Favors TEC Diocese

A county judge has ordered the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh (Anglican) to surrender diocesan property and assets to the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church in the United States.

Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, filed the lawsuit against the Rt. Rev. Robert W. Duncan, then the Episcopal Church's Bishop of Pittsburgh, and the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in October 2003.

Pittsburgh's diocesan convention voted in 2008 to leave the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church has reconstituted the diocese, which consists of approximately 40 percent of its previous membership.

Judge Joseph M. James of the Court of Common Pleas in Allegheny County ruled on Oct. 6 that a court-approved agreement from 2005 requires that property remain with a diocese of the Episcopal Church.

"Regardless of what name defen-

dants now call themselves, they are not the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America," the judge wrote. "The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America did not cease to exist when the defendants chose to withdraw."

"This ruling supports our position all along that an agreement is an agreement, especially when entered in good faith and in a court of law," said the Rev. James Simons, president of the standing committee.

"We lost. In human terms we lost," Bishop Duncan wrote in a pastoral letter to his diocese. "Bishop and standing committee, together with board of trustees, thought we understood the document that was signed on our behalf in 2005 that ended the first phase of the Calvary lawsuit."

Bishop Duncan said his diocese reserves the right to appeal.

Diocese of Chicago to Refocus Ordination Program

The Diocese of Chicago will take a “sabbath time” in 2010 from receiving new people who feel called to holy orders. The Rt. Rev Jeffrey D. Lee, Bishop of Chicago since February 2008, said he noticed early in his work that the diocese’s Commission on Ministry was exceptionally busy.

“We have 40-plus people at various stages of the process. That’s a lot of folks,” Bishop Lee told *THE LIVING CHURCH*.

The sabbath time will not interrupt the progress of anyone already accepted into the diocese’s discernment program.

The bishop has asked the Rev. Sam Portaro, former chaplain at the University of Chicago, to serve as a coach to the Commission on Ministry during the sabbath year. The program was last revised in the mid-1990s, the bishop said.

The revised program likely will place greater emphasis on what sort of ordained people the diocese needs. The diocese, for instance, wants people with entrepreneurial and congregational-development skills who can be flexible about their sources of income.

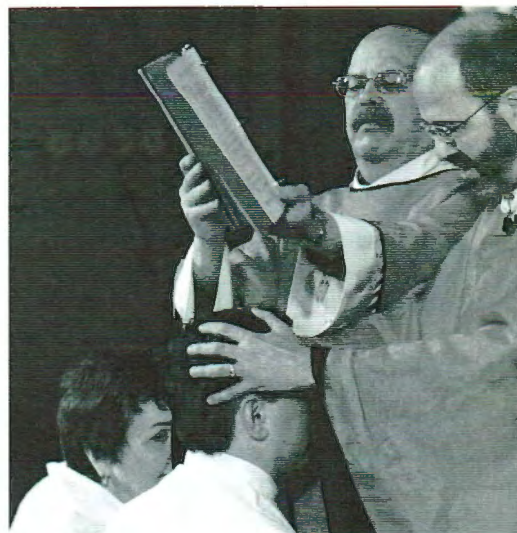
“God calls to ministry, of course, but the Church calls to holy orders. Sometimes we get that right and, God knows, sometimes we don’t,” Bishop Lee said. “We’re trying to recover and

renovate a language that at one time would have been common: Fitness for ministry.”

Both the bishop and Fr. Portaro said one change will be how to describe a person discerning a call. The language has changed from aspirant to nominee.

“It may seem a subtle shift, but it isn’t, for it involves the community in discernment long before a person’s call is clarified and put forward,” Fr. Portaro said. “In my own campus ministry experience, our interns and peer ministers — all students — were invited to participate; at the end of each academic year, our student community leaders and I reflected on who among us had evidenced gifts we could and should encourage. We found this much healthier than an open application process, though we always considered those who self-nominated. It’s just that that wasn’t the most frequently used portal.”

The bishop added that the new process likely will give him a more active role in meeting nominees early on and monitoring their progress through discernment. While the diocese has previously sponsored discernment weekends for small groups, “We’re thinking of revising that to being only a couple of people at a time, with the bishop present from the beginning.”



David Skidmore photo

Bishop Lee of Chicago ordains Aaron Gerlach to the diaconate at St. James’ Cathedral June 6.

“This is a continuing evolution of our recovery of baptismal theology,” the bishop said. “The fundamental sacrament is baptism, not ordination.”

Bishop Lee and Fr. Portaro say the diocese’s campus chaplaincies have been a source of many people who feel called to holy orders.

“We are stewards of people’s lives, and of the needs of the church,” the bishop said. “We need people with a heart for Jesus Christ who believe that the Great Commission is the reason we’re in business.”

Douglas LeBlanc

Six Nominees on Slate for Election of Bishop of Louisiana

The Diocese of Louisiana has announced a slate of six candidates for the Dec. 5 election of its 11th bishop.

The nominees are the Rev. Kurt Dunkle, rector, Grace Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; the Rev. Paul A. Elliott, rector, St. Michael and All Angels’ Church, Stone Mountain, Ga.; the Rev. Paul A. Johnson, rector, Christ Church, Glen Allen, Va.; the Rev. Ken Ritter, rector, Trinity Church, Baton Rouge, La.; the Rt. Rev. Michael G. Smith, Bishop of North Dakota and quarter-time assisting bishop in Louisiana since 2007; and the Very Rev. Morris K.

Thompson, dean, Christ Church Cathedral, Lexington, Ky.

The diocese has taken a playful approach to some details in the profiles, asking each nominee to name his favorite movies and what books he has read recently. The nominees also were invited to mention odd facts about themselves:

- Fr. Dunkle’s sisters are 15 and 17 years older than he is, so “it was like growing up in a house with three mothers.”

- During the 1970s, Fr. Elliott was an onstage bouncer at a rock concert

featuring Joe Cocker.

- Fr. Johnson plays electric bass in a band called The Rockin’ Samaritans.

- Fr. Ritter, a native of Louisiana, was once chased up a tree by an alligator.

- Bishop Smith is “an enrolled tribal member of the Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma.”

- Dean Thompson “unknowingly spent time with a bank robber immediately following his criminal act — and only became aware of who he was when I saw the nightly news.”

Supreme Court Won't Hear Los Angeles Parishes' Appeal

The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear an appeal of a property case involving the Diocese of Los Angeles and the leaders of two break-away congregations — St. James, Newport Beach, and St. David's, North Hollywood.

A ruling in January by the California Supreme Court had sent the case back to the Orange County Superior Court. Leaders of St. James said on Oct. 5 that the legal battle will continue for the long term.

"We look forward to having the trial

court rule on a written promise from the Episcopal Church in 1991 that they would never lay claim on our property," said the Rev. Richard Crocker, senior pastor of the congregation. "Our members have engaged in much prayer in order to discern God's will for our congregation and what his call might be for us. We believe God has asked us to stand steadfast for his gospel as well as to remain steadfast on this legal battlefield."

"The Diocese of Los Angeles greatly appreciates the action and insight of

the U.S. Supreme Court in declining to hear the case decided earlier this year by the California Supreme Court affirming that the property of St. James' Episcopal Church, Newport Beach, is held in trust for the current and future mission of this diocese and the wider Episcopal Church," said the Rt. Rev. J. Jon Bruno, Bishop of Los Angeles. "I reiterate that reconciliation and renewal in Christ continue to be our priorities in this matter, with our baptismal covenant calling us to respect every person's dignity."

Bishop Ray to Serve Again in Northern Michigan

The Diocese of Northern Michigan's standing committee has asked the Rt. Rev. Thomas K. Ray, bishop of the diocese from 1982 to 1999, to serve as an assisting bishop. The diocese announced this decision in the October issue of its newspaper, *The Church in Hiawathaland*.

The diocese has been without a bishop since the Rt. Rev. James A. Kelsey died in a traffic collision in June 2007.

The diocese elected the Rev. Kevin Thew Forrester, rector of St. Paul's Church, Marquette, in 2008. He did not achieve sufficient consents among bishops and standing committees to be consecrated.

In July, the standing committee

"reaffirmed [its] agreement with Tom Ray, who has been providing apostolic sacramental care and wise counsel" since Bishop Kelsey's death, the article said. The standing committee "formalized this ongoing relationship by calling him to be our assisting bishop. The standing committee continues as the ecclesiastical authority in the diocese until the election and ordination of a new bishop."

Bishop Ray is a longtime advocate of mutual ministry, which places greater emphasis on the involvement of lay Christians. The diocese's practice of mutual ministry has attracted Anglican observers from across the world.

A diocesan discernment team cited the concept of mutual ministry when

it said it would nominate only one person to become the 11th bishop of Northern Michigan. It kept that promise in nominating Fr. Thew Forrester, author of *"I Have Called You Friends...": An Invitation to Ministry* (2003), whom the diocesan convention elected. The discernment team also proposed a total-ministry version of the episcopate, in which the 11th bishop would serve in conjunction with a seven-member episcopal ministry support team.

The article added that Northern Michigan's diocesan convention, which meets on Oct. 30 and 31 in Escanaba, will hear a recommendation from the standing committee regarding a next step in electing a bishop.

Pope Welcomes New U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See

On Oct. 2, as Pope Benedict XVI welcomed the United States' new ambassador to the Holy See, he also took the opportunity to reiterate Roman Catholic teaching about the sanctity of human life.

The pope welcomed Miguel H. Díaz, who previously served as professor of theology at St. John's School of Theology-Seminary in Collegeville, Minn.

"The United States profoundly respects the Holy See as a sovereign entity, as a humanitarian actor, and

as a unique moral voice in the world," Ambassador Díaz said when presenting his credentials to the pope. "The United States and the Holy See have partnered in the cause of noble objectives. Together we have spread peace, supported religious freedom and other human rights, fostered democracy, denounced terrorism, addressed poverty and world hunger, prevented human trafficking, and combated the spread of HIV/AIDS and other terrible diseases."

Toward the end of his response,

the pope reflected on how the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life informs all its other teachings on social justice.

"Here I think particularly of the need for a clear discernment with regard to issues touching the protection of human dignity and respect for the inalienable right to life from the moment of conception to natural death, as well as the protection of the right to conscientious objection on the part of health care workers, and indeed all citizens," the pope said.



The Witch Craze

What happened, and how is the Church's role to be understood?

By Daniel Muth

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”
(Exod. 22:18)

These words from Exodus, it is often held, spelled doom for legions — some report the figure in the millions — of innocents, mainly women, across Europe in the Middle Ages as a wave of Inquisition-inspired terror is claimed to have descended on the gullibly superstitious believers of Christendom. Some have used the term “Women’s Holocaust” to describe this putative slaughter, purportedly at the hands of churchmen.

Nothing much like that happened, however. There was a wave of witch trials in early modern Europe, and famously in Salem, Mass., though records are spotty prior to the 15th century, and it cannot be presumed too lightly that witch trials are purely a thing of early modernity. Nevertheless, Central Europe saw executions in the tens of thousands across a span of about 400 years, most concentrated in the century following the onset of the Protestant Reformation. Estimates range at about 40,000 to 60,000 lives lost — equating to about 120 deaths per year, or roughly three times the number of annual fatalities in latter-day America due to bee stings. Yet 50,000 deaths is still

a lot, and by pretty much any reckoning none were necessary. What happened, and how is the Church’s role to be understood?

The former question is not easily determined. The recognition that the world operates on scientific rather than magical principles was neither quickly nor easily arrived at. The brewing of potions, chanting of incantations, reading of auguries, and foretelling by the stars were all to some extent accepted practices across pre-modern times and cultures. Similar things remain popular today.

If anything, the Christian Church, following its Jewish forebear, has inclined toward skepticism rather than credulity with regard to claims of witchcraft. Among many other things, Holy Scripture is an extended, divinely-inspired rejection of superstition. It is God who knows the times and seasons and his children may not divine them. Indeed, the various scriptural condemnations of magic, augury, and necromancy all carry an implication that magical practices involve attempts to usurp the place of God and/or appeal to powers other than him. Witchcraft is ultimately idolatrous.

Accordingly, the medieval Church treated the matter as more nearly infidelism than heresy, thus the target of per-

suasion instead of punishment. Charlemagne punished the persecution of witches and Gregory VII in the 11th century forbade the killing of women for supposedly causing storms and epidemics. This was the position of most prelates throughout the Middle Ages.

In 1258, Pope Alexander IV refused to allow the Inquisition to deal with witchcraft without a proven connection to heresy. Such charges had been bandied about with respect to dualist heresies since the early 11th century, and by this time a bloody crusade had been instigated against the Cathari in Southern France. It was not until 1326 that John XXII allowed the Holy Office to become involved in such proceedings, much, as it turned out, to the advantage of the unfortunate accused.

Late-medieval Church courts were extremely unlikely to execute accused witches unless they could be shown to be unrepentant heretics. Rather, the Church tended to release without punishment any who recanted; and all the more if the accused were judged simply to be insane, or odd. By contrast, the secular, and particularly local, courts were much more likely to execute accused witches, at a rate of 9 out of 10, by some estimates.

The infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches), a sensationally misogynist guide to the conduct of witch trials, was written in 1486 by a pair of Dominican inquisitors: Johann Sprenger, dean of the University of Cologne in Germany, and Heinrich (Institoris) Kraemer, professor of theology at the University of Salzburg. The book bore as an introduction a Bull by Innocent VIII, who may well have never actually read it. Available evidence indicates that, though the book went through 28 editions, it was seldom used in trials, its academic language making it, in the main, opaque to trial judges. Inquisitors generally found it little more than a source of embarrassment.

The height of the witch craze lasted about a hundred years, from roughly 1550 to 1650, years that marked the great upheaval of the Protestant Reformation and concomitant unrest in Europe. As a group, the leaders of the Reformation were as little interested in persecuting accused witches as were representatives of Rome. The laity, however, particularly in a kind of mob mentality not always effectively blunted by Church officials, presented a different case altogether.

Women were only marginally more prone to accusation than men, and midwives or folk healers were not (as is sometimes claimed) particularly singled out for accusa-

For Further Reading

The following are general histories of the subject, to which the material in this article can be traced:

Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Longman; 2nd edition 1995)

Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (Routledge; 1996)

Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Cornell University Press; 1986, reissued 1992)

Philip Sampson, *Six Modern Myths About Christianity and Western Civilization: Six Ideas Everyone Believes That Really Aren't True* (InterVarsity Press 2001)

tion. Indeed, these latter were more likely to be accuser than accused, as the object of their allegation often functioned as an effective business rival. By far the most executions were in Germany and other regions along the dividing line (generally, the borders of the Old Roman Empire) between Protestant and Catholic principalities. Only four Irishmen were put to death for witchcraft, but over 20,000 Germans.

The Salem incident is notable because it was so unusual. The movement decreased after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 and the last witch was executed in Switzerland in 1782.

Neither the rise of the Enlightenment (scientists of the day were actually more prone than churchmen to aid in prosecuting witch trials) nor the decrease of Roman Catholic hegemony (Protestant laymen were as enthusiastic as their Catholic brethren) account for the end of the phenomenon. Rather, it appears that the key element was the return of social stability that marked the cessation of post-Reformation warfare. With the centralization of authority, local mobs could no longer carry out frontier justice on the suspect or the unpopular. Churchmen had been skeptical of outrageous accusations all along, and the State had little interest in pursuing "crimes" that could scarcely be said to constitute threats to the body politic.

And so the sad chapter ended. When compared to the death toll of the contemporary Thirty Years' War — seven million or so — not to mention the abattoirs of the century just passed, the witch craze amounts to less than a footnote. Yet even so relatively mild a mass bloodletting is a cause for some reckoning.

Church history comprises two distinguishable, though related, streams: magisterial Christianity, that of the great orthodox theologians, teachers, saints, and councils; and folk Christianity, that in the pews. One of the great challenges of pastors, preachers and exegetes in any age is to guide the latter as nearly as possible after the example of the former. The Church's leaders are not always successful in this endeavor. In the case of the witch craze, the failure of her leaders to teach effectively had disastrous and, for many, deadly consequences. □

Daniel Muth resides in Prince Frederick, Md., and is a frequent contributor to THE LIVING CHURCH.



Guest Column

A Vision of Unity Restored

By Tony Clavier

“There is no such thing as the Anglican church,” we are assured by those who propose a minimalist definition of the Anglican tradition in its contemporary worldwide manifestation.

Those on the left affirm that each province or “national church” within our Communion is a church, whereas the churches of the Communion together are *not* a church — a rather confusing bit of arithmetic. Such reasoning has one intention: to establish that no authority exists beyond each particular national or provincial ecclesial entity which may bind that church or restrict its autonomy.

At the other end of the spectrum are provinces and national churches which in effect undermine the ecclesiology of Anglicanism by claiming the right unilaterally — without appeal to the councils of the Communion — to decide with whom they will and will not exercise an ecclesial relationship. Thus, on their own authority they declare that an Anglican church in a given territory is of no consequence, and plant a replacement.

Is a Communion a church?

I will attempt to answer this question by meditating on what we mean by “the communion of saints,” an expression linked with “the holy catholic Church” in the last section of that great baptismal symbol, the Apostles’ Creed. The creed identifies the “Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting” as works of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. In and through the Spirit these have been created and made possible. The future life of God’s people in a new heaven and new earth is guaranteed by the forgiveness of sins, and the mission of the Church is to announce that restorative forgiveness. Through baptism we are restored to fellowship with the Trinity and the saints in light,

and become communicants of that body.

The Church is therefore God’s mystical fellowship through which we have communion with the saints, scripturally defined as those who have been called and chosen by God. Yet ever since the Great Schism between East and West, and more so since the Reformation, Christians have sought to make sense of our unhappy divisions by providing vague and unsatisfactory commentary on what *Church* and *communion* mean. We see overtones of this in the Anglican context in attempts to de-church the Communion, or un-church its member provinces. Both are essentially protective theories, which usually produce more problems than they solve.

From a credal standpoint, following on the New Testament, *communion* describes how the Church works. It works as the baptized, in communion with their bishops, and in communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, do that which the Church was formed to do until our Lord returns in glory. It is true that the Anglican Communion is not the whole Church. Yet it is surely not less than the Church; or its “parts” are not less than the Church. There is a difference between not being something in its entirety and not being something at all.

The Church has always allowed its local manifestations to adapt their work and worship as local custom and culture require. If that is what is meant by autonomy, so be it; but it is schism, a rupture in the body, when a local church claims to aggregate to itself the identity of the whole church.

Covenant and Communion

Not too long ago the Anglican Communion possessed a covenant. The provinces of the Communion were united in heritage through the See of Canterbury, in liturgy by the prayer book, and by a

(Continued on page 14)

The Church is God's mystical fellowship through which we have communion with the saints.

Amen, Pittsburgh

The Episcopal Church's Diocese of Pittsburgh achieved something extraordinary on Oct. 5: It showed grace to more than 100 clergy who have followed their bishop, the Rt. Rev. Robert W. Duncan, out of the Episcopal Church and into what is now the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

The diocese's eight-member standing committee has offered these priests and deacons the option of renouncing their ministry rather than being deposed. Further, the standing committee clarified that these renunciations applied only to ministry within the Episcopal Church. In the most important sentence of a two-page letter to their former brothers and sisters in ministry, members of the standing committee wrote this: "This does not affect your ordination, which you may register with whatever entity you choose."

In writing this, the standing committee addressed the primary concern of clergy who must consider the terms of Canon III.9.8: A lack of clarity about whether they are renouncing the entirety of their holy orders or merely acknowledging that they no longer wish to be clergy of the Episcopal Church.

No wonder the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Price, who awaits the diocesan convention's affirmation as provisional bishop, found this decision moving. "As the standing committee worked through this necessary action," he said, "I was painfully aware that they were not just talking about a list of clergy, but friends of long standing."

Reflection on a theology of holy orders should prompt many Episcopalians to greet Pittsburgh's decision with *Amen* or *Alleluia*.

The Episcopal Church ordains clergy on the understanding that they join the great stream of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. Episcopal clergy are neither mere franchise owners nor institutional drones. They are individuals with free will whom God has called to serve in one corner of the vineyard that is the Church.

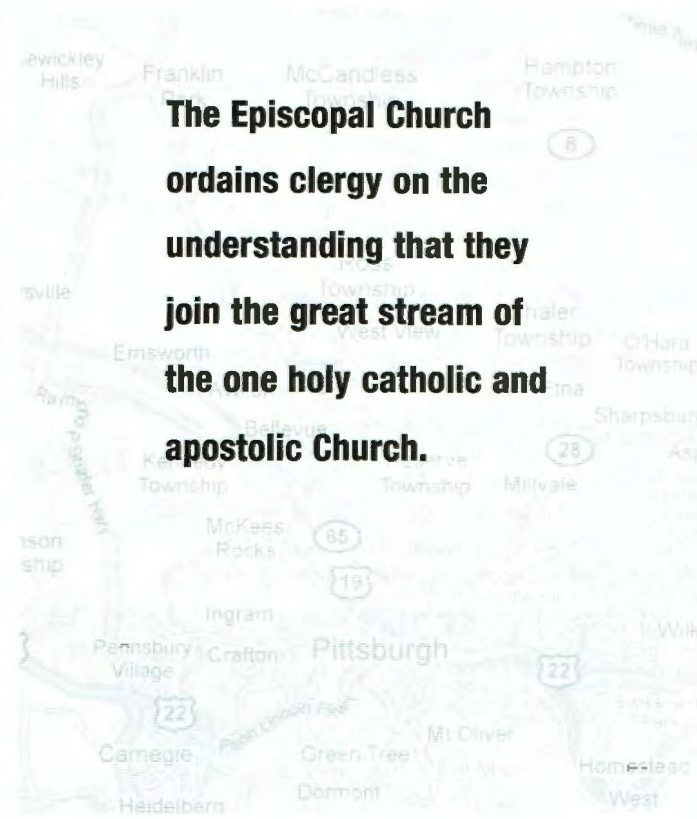
Over time, some clergy conclude they are driven by God, by conscience or by a changing theology to serve in other corners of the vineyard. Those corners may be our mother churches of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, our sister churches of Lutheranism or Methodism — or, in the case of ACNA, a sometimes brash younger sibling with grand, global ambitions. Greeting such choices with anger and threats suggests a failure to understand God's comprehensive work in this world, even amid human sins that further fracture the Church.

The actions of Pittsburgh's standing committee speak to a weakness in Canon III.9.8. The canon has a lingering odor of punishing the wayward. Consider these words, and two suggestions on how they might be made more pastoral:

The Bishop ... may pronounce that such renunciation is accepted, and that the Priest is released from the obligations of the Ministerial office, and is deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority as a Minister of God's Word and Sacraments conferred in Ordination of this Church.

We will leave our editorial tinkering at that. Pittsburgh's standing committee found a godly path through this thicket. The same path is now open to other bishops and standing committees with hearts of flesh.

Regardless of how many priests and deacons accept this offer, there is an inherent beauty in it. May all Episcopalians who are serious about including the Other and spreading reconciliation attend to the wisdom shown in Pittsburgh.



**The Episcopal Church
ordains clergy on the
understanding that they
join the great stream of
the one holy catholic and
apostolic Church.**



Two Parties Needed

Thank you, Bishop Little, for such a thoughtful, reasonable, and informative Viewpoint [TLC, Oct. 11]. All moderates and liberals in the Episcopal Church should take note of it and appreciate your valuable conservative conscience.

Numbers on the right have, indeed, diminished. Now, 12 American diocesan bishops can be called distinctly conservative. They are the ones who voted "No" on General Convention Resolutions DO25 and CO56 and were original signatories of the Anaheim Statement. I believe it would be a disaster for the church in more ways than one for that number to fall to zero. As with the federal government, the Episcopal Church needs a two-party system. The balance and counterbalance of widely varying views is better for all of us.

Unfortunately, not all of the 11 like-minded bishops share Bishop Little's attachment to the national church.

Bishop Lawrence of South Carolina has called a special convention of his diocese to approve his resolutions that "the governing bodies of the Episcopal Church have failed to operate within the boundaries of its canons," that the church is in "dysfunction," that the church has "assented to actions contrary to holy scripture, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ..." and that "DO25 and CO56 ... hav[e] no effect in this diocese." Bishop Lawrence, and the other ten conservative bishops, would do well to read and reread Bishop Little's comments.

*Ronald Caldwell
Jacksonville, Ala.*

Finally Settled

Your editorial, "Commitment to Covenant," misses the point entirely [TLC, Sept. 27]. We are an Anglican

Communion, not an Anglican Covenant. Following the explicit example and commandment of Jesus, we take bread and wine, bless it and share it. Those who come to the table when invited are in communion with one another; those who reject the offer are not, each by their own choice and free will. When Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori or Bishop Gene Robinson celebrates the Eucharist, those who come to the table and share the meal are in the communion. Those who reject the invitation have broken communion, regardless of convoluted posturing and theological circumlocution to the contrary.

The Anglican Communion is already broken. Those of us still in communion can now spend our time, money and energy feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and bringing good news to the poor.

*(The Rev.) John W. Conrad
All Saints' Church
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
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Radical Alternative

What will happen after Section 4 of the Ridley Cambridge Draft has been revised and the Anglican covenant is offered to the 44 churches for signatures? It is near certain that some churches will not sign the covenant unless it provides for suspension or ejection of offending churches from the Communion, and other churches will not sign it unless it does. Thus, the process of deciding to sign or not may become the occasion for the breakup of the Anglican Communion.

There is a possible solution, though a radical one. It is to replace the original vision of all 44 churches signing in a solemn liturgical setting with a different concept of adoption. It means abandoning paragraph 4.1.6 of the Ridley Cambridge Draft, under which "covenanting churches" would be bound by the covenant and non-signing churches would not. A radical "non-signing" alternative to this divisive process was suggested in March 2006 and quickly forgotten. The working paper "Toward an Anglican Covenant" suggested that the Anglican Consultative Council could adopt the document and offer it to the Communion as an amendment to its constitution, subject to a two-thirds vote of the churches.

A less formal variation would be publication of a new, non-signing version by either the ACC or the Archbishop of Canterbury. The nature of the covenant would change. It would, in three sections, explain the structure of the Communion and its churches' basic tenets, articulating what has to date been assumed. In section four, it would offer the whole Communion a mechanism for the resolution of inter-church disputes. Section four's basic assumption would be that patient listening, prayer, study and debate will eventually result in resolution of any dispute, no matter how insoluble it might first appear.

These suggestions would require a change in direction and would mean revisiting all sections of the covenant. However, that effort might be far preferable to a division of the Communion.

*Walter H. Beaman
Tequesta, Fla.*

Deaths

The Rev. Canon **John Harlow Backus**, retired rector of Church of the Good Shepherd, New York, NY, and a leader in Anglican-Orthodox relations, died of a heart attack Sept. 19 while in Switzerland visiting a friend. He was 71.

Canon Backus was born July 25, 1938, in Greenwood, SD. He attended Grinnell College in Iowa, taught high school in Thessalonika, Greece (1960-62), then graduated from Church Divinity School of the Pacific. He was ordained deacon in 1965 and priest in 1966. Fr. Backus served as chaplain at the Charles Wright Academy in Tacoma, WA, 1966-71, then went to Oxford University and served as acting chaplain during his studies at both Oriel and Corpus Christi colleges. He focused on the history and progress of Anglican and Eastern Orthodox relations and published a treatise titled *Archbishop Temple and the Orthodox*. Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie appointed him the ambassador to the Ecumenical Patriarch, 1973-75. He was rector of Trinity, Everett, WA, 1975-84; dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Peoria, IL, 1984-91; priest-in-charge and later rector of Good Shepherd, New York, NY, from 1992 until his retirement in 2003. He was a member of the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (1973-76), a consultant to the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions, and was instrumental in furthering the partnership between the Diocese of New York and the Patriarchate of Moscow. His mastery of languages aided him greatly in ecclesiastical diplomacy. In January he taught a course in Byzantine history at the

Ming Hua Theological College (Anglican seminary) in Hong Kong. He was elected as a Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and in 1975 received the Grand Cross of the Great Church in Constantinople from the Ecumenical Patriarch. He retired to Quilcene, WA, in 2003. He is survived by a brother, James.


The Rev. **John "Jack" W. Parker**, 86, a priest of the Diocese of Connecticut, died Sept. 12 at his home in Waterbury, CT.

Fr. Parker was born June 3, 1923, in Fitchburg, obtained a bachelor's degree from Trinity College, Hartford, CT; a master's in library science from Columbia University; and a master of divinity from Episcopal Divinity School. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1961. All the churches Fr. Parker served are in Waterbury. He was vicar of All Souls', 1961-64; vicar of St. Paul's, 1962-64; rector of St. Mark's beginning in 1964 and priest-in-charge of Trinity, beginning in 1967, until retirement in 1988. He was associate at St. John's in 1995. Fr. Parker is survived by a son, David, of Santa Fe, NM; daughters Susan E. Parker of Torrington, CT, Cindy J. Seguin of New Preston, CT, and Carol A. Walters of Plymouth, CT; a sister, Patricia Adams, of Biddeford, ME; and three grandchildren. His wife preceded him in death.

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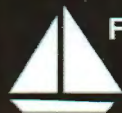
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Betty A. Glatzel, General Manager

Guest Column

(Continued from page 10)

statement of faith, the Articles of Religion. The proposed covenant is not something new, but rather a replacement for something older.

But neither the first covenant nor its proposed replacement are “confessions,” except as they confess that Jesus is Lord according to Scripture, creeds, councils and tradition more generally. Rather, the proposed covenant is a means to an end. It is a mechanism whereby the provinces and national churches of the Communion may profess their unity and concord.

Covenant is first used in the Old Testament as a solemn agreement whereby God’s adoption of Israel is responded to by Israel’s compact with the living God. In the New Testament this compact, or unbreakable bond, is revived in the coming, life, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, made present by and through the Holy Spirit.

The Episcopal Church talks much of our baptismal covenant, a solemn series of promises we make to God and each other in response to God’s adoption of us in baptism.

In this light, it seems passing strange that some would balk at our making common covenant together to be the Church through sacramental communion and fellowship, and through a common commitment to tell the gospel. Such a covenant is also a commitment to the vision of the whole Church, restored to unity by the Spirit. Accordingly, those who, by commitment or action, grasp to themselves an omniscient local autonomy are at best non-ecumenical denominationalists, at worst anti-ecumenical rebels.

We must begin with God — *theology* — if we want to understand the vocabulary of the Church. That we fly to political and secular definitions to enlighten our thinking about Church, communion and covenant only demonstrates the extent to which our faith has been compromised by the culture in which we live.

The Rev. Tony Clavier is rector of St. Paul’s Church, LaPorte, Ind., and a member of the Communion Partner coalition.

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