

[send this](#)[bookmark](#)[print](#)[close](#)

# The Parish Paper

OF  
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol.34 No.47

St. Luke Evangelist and Physician

10/19/03

## Remembering Home

"Home is where one starts from," says Eliot. My childhood home was situated in a lovely neighborhood full of oaks, pines, magnolias, willows, and dogwoods. I remember the smell of burning leaves in the fall and the whiff of honeysuckle in the spring. Winter brought cold rain and sometimes ice, accentuating the nakedness of nature. Summer meant the sweet fragrance of green grass, and that most wonderful scent of Georgia red clay. Our lovely neighborhood was calm and peaceful then. Now it is covered with monstrous skyscrapers and grotesque condominiums. "Houses live and die," says Eliot again. Thank God for the memory.

The Episcopal Church had its home once in England, where the Primates of the Anglican Communion determine this week whether we will remain Catholic or not. What the Church of England was in worship, music, and thought is no longer. Magnificent buildings stand still, and clever guides make their living off of them, but the walls are almost silent with voices of truth and mercy. The remnant may sometimes be found there, but little spiritual life remains. What was once a garden path is fast becoming a wilderness.

The Episcopal Church has already discovered the wilderness beyond that of her mother. Since the seventies, one third of the membership has walked out. Revised prayer books and the ordination of women, innovations intended to evangelize the contemporary mind, have left the church fragmented with contrary opinions and persuasions. The number of clergy is steadily declining. Liturgy, music, teaching, preaching, and daily devotion are found at the lowest possible level. What was once an inclusive national church is rapidly becoming an organization of radical urban liberals.

What are the Primates doing this week? As I write, I do not know. But I do know what they should be doing. They should remember, first of all, where their true home is. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9).

Nothing brings clarity of mind to the faithful soul more than the holy memory. Even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the memory dwells not on evil, but on God's goodness. He is that Triune Glory who condescends to touch us with his grace; that Personal Life who knows us better than we know ourselves and loves us more deeply than we can fathom; that Mystery made known in

Jesus. He is that wise and beautiful Providence that will not have his will thwarted by our sin, but will, as St. Anselm reasoned, rectify all things in perfect justice. "I am God, and there is none else."  
"Remember the former things of old," says Isaiah.

The Primates would do well not to collapse into mere patterns of collegiality, but humbly to remember their origin in the gracious will of God. He is where we start from. "My heart hath talked of thee, Seek ye my face: Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:9).

And then their memory should move to focus on the sacrifice of Jesus. His is the life and death, once offered, as a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." The heart of our Communion is here and nowhere else. The memory of our redemption is the abiding place of God's salvation and the beginning of our humility. Such a remembrance, truly sought, will lead to a quiet confession and real repentance. Rest is here. We are at home.

And finally the remembrance of the Primates should move to the Communion of Saints. The Holy Ghost enkindles the flame of love in their hearts. The Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs are joyfully arrayed as a cloud of witnesses. Their history tells the true tale of Christ's love.

In the Communion of Saints the Primates can remember the gentle strength of St. Stephen who called upon God in the midst of being stoned. They can visit with St. Paul, rehearsing the highest gift of charity, as he is marched toward his execution. They can hear St. Irenaeus articulate the truth of Christ and his Church against false teachers. They can accompany St. Athanasius, the champion of Nicaea, in his many hardships of exile. They can listen to the fiery preaching of St. Chrysostom. They can kneel beside St. Augustine, the towering intellect of the West, as he weeps for his sins on his deathbed. They can follow the life of prayer with St. Benedict. They can forsake the extravagance of the world with St. Francis and embrace holy poverty and the cross of suffering. They can sit at the feet of St. Thomas Aquinas, feel the freedom of Martin Luther, and share in the liturgy of Thomas Cranmer. Finally, they can kiss the flames of Latimer and Ridley.

The Primates should remember, first of all, the substance of the Church Catholic in the experience of the Communion of Saints. They should move within the holy memory to find their true home in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And, then, they can turn with wisdom to correct the errors of the Episcopal Church.

Only if the Primates act out of a holy memory, will their actions have any authority and merit. We hope and pray that as the Primates open their Bibles, they remember who is the Head of the Church. And that as they glorify Christ they remember what the Church Catholic has been and is, on whose shoulders they stand, and what it is that they, the leaders of the Anglican Communion, have taken oaths to defend.

If they do, then the wilderness of the Episcopal Church, and indeed of the Church of England, can again become a garden path. And the fruits of the Spirit will grow afresh. If they do not, the entire Anglican Communion will be nearly dried up, and ready to burn, not with flames of love, but with flames of judgment.

**The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker**

send this

bookmark

print

close

[Report Errors](#) | [Comments](#)

Copyright 2003 - 2004 St. John's Episcopal Church in Savannah, GA. All rights reserved.