

THE QUILL

Volume 16, Issue 8

August, 2003

A LETTER FROM OUR MINISTRY STUDY INTERN

"Welcome to St. Bede's!", delightful words delivered with outstretched hands from all of you! Thank you for making me feel so at home so quickly in your parish for my Ministry Study Year. I come to you from St. Peter's, San Pedro and prior to that, All Saints, Beverly Hills, my parish from childhood (Cradle Episcopalian). I have wonderful memories of Sunday School, singing in the Blue Choir, children's services in the side chapel, and of course the glazed doughnuts offered at Coffee Hour. As a college student I taught the pre-school class at All Saints and chaperoned the Youth Group on many escapades. My undergraduate degree is from USC in Art History and I enjoyed touring students for over ten years at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Professionally, I had my own party coordinating company for fourteen years until the birth of my children. I have been blessed with twins, Will and Samantha (15), and James (13). They are my greatest gift! In the early 90's I felt a deepening passion for Christ and the church and by the mid-90's I felt that God might be calling me to ordained ministry. Upon the advice of my rector at All Saints, I began taking classes at Fuller Theologi-

cal Seminary to explore the academic side of ministry. I have grown tremendously through this experience and I look forward to finishing my Master of Divinity at the Episcopal Theological School at Claremont. Church History and Pastoral Care have become particular passions of mine. My lay ministry experience has included the following: pastoral care, prayer team, inner-healing team, Lay Eucharistic Minister, Visiting Eucharistic Minister, Sub-Deacon, EFM co-mentor, educational forums, Evening Prayer with homilies for the Canterbury Home, church history lectures, small group leadership, clerk of the Vestry, and Sunday School/Vacation Bible School teacher. On the Diocesan level, I am serving as a heterosexual member of the Bishop's Commission for Gay and Lesbian Ministries to further bridge-building and education within our church. I am thrilled to be assigned to St. Bede's for the coming year. I know that I will grow in Christ not only by Fr. Jim's mentorship, but also, by my association with you, the congregation. I have much to learn and hopefully much to offer.

Vicki Mouradian

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THIS MONTH

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FR. JIM'S JOTTINGS

As I am soon off to the General Convention, this article by Karen Armstrong is quite relevant.

In Christ, **Fr. Jim+**

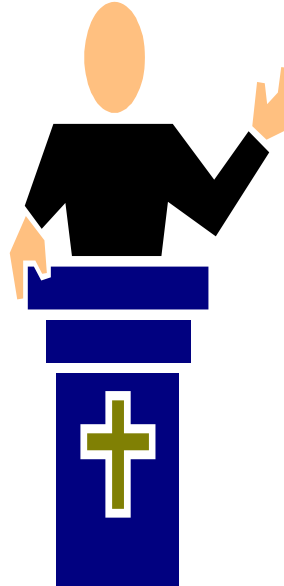
NOT-SO-HOLY MATRIMONY

Christianity has always had a bleaker view of love - gay or straight - than any other faith

Karen Armstrong—Monday June 30, 2003—The Guardian

The consecration and recognition of its first [openly] gay bishop threatens to split the Anglican communion down the middle. There has not been such ferment in the Church of England since the decision to ordain women to the priesthood. There is similar uproar in the United States, where an openly gay Episcopalian priest has been elected bishop of New Hampshire, even though many American Christians regard a rejection of homosexuality as the benchmark of orthodoxy.

Issues of sexuality and gender have long been the Achilles' heel of western Christianity. Indeed, in the earliest days of the church, Christians had a jaundiced view of heterosexual marriage, and saw celibacy as the prime Christian vocation. Jesus had urged his followers to leave their wives and children (Luke 14:25-26). St Paul, the earliest Christian writer, believed



that because Jesus was about to return and inaugurate the Kingdom of God, where there would be no marriage or giving in marriage, it was simply not worth saddling yourself with a wife or husband. This, Paul was careful to emphasise, was simply his own opinion, not a divine ruling. It was perfectly acceptable for Christians to marry if they wished, but in view of the imminent second coming, Paul personally recommended celibacy.

The fathers of the church often used these New Testament remarks to revile marriage, with the same intensity as those Christians who condemn homosexual partnerships today. The fathers accepted - albeit grudgingly - that marriage was part of God's plan. St Augustine taught that originally in the Garden of Eden, married sex had been rational and good. But after the fall, sexuality became a sign of humanity's chronic sinfulness, a raging and ungovernable force, a mindless, bestial enjoyment of the creature that held us back from the contemplation of God. Augustine's doctrine of original sin fused sexuality and sin indissolubly in the imagination of the Christian west.

For centuries this tainted the institution of matrimony. Augustine saw his conversion to Christianity as a vocation of celibacy. "We ought not to condemn wedlock because of the evil of lust," he explained, "but nor must we praise lust because of the good of wedlock." His teacher, St Ambrose of Milan, believed that "virginity is the one thing that keeps us from the

FROM THE RECORDS

VISITORS

Fr. Robert Moore, Dennis Lytton, Ameer & Chris Gallagher, Alia Granger, Betsy Hiteshaw, Laura Spraker, Nancy Llewellyn, Henry Atwater, Bill & Dorothy Funk, Sylvia Wilder, Dulcie Ellis, April Marten, Corrin Jelinek

FUNERALS

William Bonyng—7/14

SCHEDULE OF HISTORIC SERVICES THIS YEAR

AUGUST 10 — 1559 (The Prayer Book of Elizabeth I)

AUGUST 24 — 1636 (The Scottish Liturgy)

OCTOBER 5 — 1662 (The Prayer Book of Charles II)

OCTOBER 19 — 1789 (The 1st American Prayer Book)

NOVEMBER 9 — 1892 (The 2nd American Prayer Book)

NOVEMBER 16 — 1928 (The 3rd American Prayer Book)

DECEMBER 7 — 1979 (The 4th American Prayer Book)

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

BIRTHDAYS

Jeffrey Hornof, 08/01

Jaron Fuglie, 08/03

Leona Jennison, 08/04

Jefferey Leng, 08/06

Ricky Demer, 08/12

Kit Russell, 08/14

Amanda Harder, 08/19

Greg Vielhaber, 08/19

James Raef, 08/23

Alex Harter, 08/26

Calypso Raef, 08/26

Don Shaw, 08/28

Tori Hisserrich-Patterson, 08/30

Tom Ledsam, 08/31

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

David & Pat Toy, 08/25

Ned & Adelaide Vaughn, 08/30

beasts". The north African theologian Tertullian equated marriage with fornication. "It is not disparaging wedlock to prefer virginity," wrote St Jerome. "No one can compare two things if one is good and the other evil." When one of his women disciples contemplated a second marriage, Jerome turned on her in disgust: "The dog has turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

In England during the middle ages, couples were married in the church porch and not in the sanctuary - a practice that eloquently revealed the liminal status of matrimony in the Christian worldview: Chaucer's Wife of Bath married five husbands "at the church door". Even Luther, who left his monastery to marry, inherited Augustine's bleak view of sex. "No matter what praise is given to marriage," he wrote, "I will not concede that it is no sin." Matrimony was a "hospital for sick people". It merely covered the shameful act with a veneer of respectability, so that "God winks at it".

Calvin was the first western theologian to praise marriage unreservedly, and thereafter Christians began to speak of "holy matrimony". The present enthusiasm for "family values" is, therefore, relatively recent. In the Roman Catholic church, however, priests are still required to be celibate, and whatever the official teaching about the sanctity of marriage, the ban on artificial contraception implies that sex is only legitimate when there is a possibility of procreation. For most of its history, Christianity has had a more negative view of heterosexual love than almost any other major faith.

The current attempt to recognise homosexual partnerships is thus the latest development in a long struggle to bring sexuality into the ambit of the sacred. In principle, Christianity should have a special reverence for the physical, because it teaches that in some sense God took a human body and used it to redeem the world. But the evangelicals who oppose gay priests would argue that because the Bible condemns the sin of Sodom, the recognition of homosexuality is a step too far.

But in fact everybody reads the Bible selectively. If people followed every single biblical ruling to the letter, the world would be full of Christians who love their enemies and refuse to judge other people, which is plainly not the case. Christians would also be obliged to eat kosher meat (Acts 15:20) and stone their disobedient sons to death (Deut. 21:18-21). The world has changed and practices that were acceptable 2,000 years ago have become abhorrent. We also have a more complex understanding of sexuality than the biblical writers.

Yet the Bible has to be read with care. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 condemns homosexual rape and the violation of the sacred rules of hospitality rather than homosexuality per se. It has nothing to say about the open, stable gay relationships that are essentially a feature of modern western society, and did not exist in their current form in the biblical world.

Again, the rules against sodomy in Leviticus 18 and 20 are not legislating for ordinary human affairs. Throughout, the authors of Leviticus are chiefly concerned with temple ritual. The practices forbidden in these chapters featured prominently in the idolatrous religions of the near east, which, as we know from the Bible, the people of Israel found extremely alluring: ritual bestiality (as practised in Egypt),

child sacrifice, and the cultic use of menstrual blood in sorcery. The verses against sodomy (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13) forbid temple prostitution: in the late seventh century, there had been a house of sacred male prostitutes in God's temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:7) It is this kind of worship, which defiles the land, that concerns Leviticus.

In the same spirit, St Paul's condemnation of the "unnatural practices" of the Graeco-Roman world springs from a visceral disgust with idolatry, the root cause of all the disorders in Paul's long list (Romans 1:20-31). The Bible is not a holy encyclopedia, giving clear and unequivocal information; nor is it a legal code that can be applied indiscriminately to our very different society. Lifting isolated texts out of their literary and cultural context can only distort its message. Instead, we should look at the underlying principles of biblical religion, and apply these creatively to our own situation.

Modern readers frequently misunderstand Leviticus. Throughout the Pentateuch, the priestly writers insist on God's compassionate care for his creatures: all are pronounced good, exactly as he made them. Even those animals declared "unclean" in the cult must be left in peace and their integrity respected. In the New Testament, Jesus goes out of his way to consort with those whose sexual lives were condemned by the self-righteous establishment. According to Jesus, nobody has the right to cast the first stone in these matters.

For centuries Christians failed to live up to this inclusive mandate, and found it difficult to accept their sexuality. Eventually, however, they learned to overcome their prejudice in favour of celibacy, and realised that heterosexual marriage could bring them to God. They should now be ready for the next step.

Karen Armstrong is the author of [**A History of God**](#)

NEWS NOTES

***The PARISH RETREAT at MT. CALVARY, 11/21-23 has 1 space remaining ... sign up NOW!!

***Fr. Newman will be away July 30—August 8 at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, MN. In case of emergency, please call Mthr. Golie.

***Please remember to keep your pledges current. The summer months still have ongoing bills to pay!!!

***The choir is in street dress all summer (thru October); this is a good time to talk with Frank Basile about informally singing with the choir for a few weeks to try it out!!

***Please begin thinking about the Sisters of Bede Venue Events for 2003-2004 (excluding Lent, 2/25-4/9); turn proposed events to the Sisters by August 3!!

***The Friends of Music Board is looking for members; please contact Annette Graw if you are interested (310-545-3617 or info@annettegraw.com

AUGUST LESSONS: HOLY SUMMER

SUNDAY LESSONS

August 3 (Proper 13) - Mthr. Haynes

2 Samuel 5.1-5,9-10; Ps. 48; 2 Corinthians 12.2-10; Mark 6.1-13

August 10 (1559 Service, Trinity 8) - Fr. Newman

Ps. 119.25-32; Romans 8.18-23; Luke 6.36-42

AUGUST 17 (Proper 15) - Ms. Mouradian

2 Samuel 7.1-14a; Ps. 89.20-37; Ephesians 2.11-22; Mark 6.30-34,53-56

AUGUST 24 (1636 Scottish Service, Trinity 10) - Fr. Newman

Romans 6. 3-11; Matthew 5.20-26

AUGUST 31 (Proper 17) - Fr. Happ

2 Samuel 7.1-14a; Ps. 89.20-37; Ephesians 2.11-22; Mark 6.30-34,53-56

WEDNESDAY LESSONS

8/6 — Ps. 34.1-8; Genesis 21.5,8-20; Matthew 8.28-34 (AH)

8/13 — Ps. 33.1-4,18-22; Genesis 41.55-57 & 42.5-7a,17-24a; Matthew 10.1-7 (JN)

8/20 — Ps. 103.1-7; Exodus 3.1-12; Matthew 11.25-27 (JN)

8/27 — [Mary Magdalene] Ps. 42.1-7; Judith 9.1,11-14; 2 Corinthians 5.14-18;

John 20.11-18 [JN]

ST. BEDE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

3590 Grand View Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90066

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Fax: 310-391-8113

Parish Hall Telephone: 310-391-9316

Emergency Pager: 310-915-3848

Email: stbedesla@yahoo.com

We're on the Web!
www.stbedesla.org

SERVICES & CLASSES

SUNDAYS: 8 am, Holy Eucharist (no music)
10 am, Church School & Nursery
10 am, Holy Eucharist (w/choir)
6 pm, Evensong or Evening Prayer

TUESDAYS: 9 am, Breakfast, Morning Prayer & Bible Study

WEDNESDAYS: 7 pm, Holy Eucharist & Healing
7:45 pm, Adult Class

BREAKFAST & BIBLE

*A weekly class – beginning with breakfast – which previews
the lessons for the upcoming Sunday.*

NO CLASSES IN AUGUST!!

WEDNESDAY EVENING FORUM

Holy Eucharist is celebrated each week at 7 pm.

August 6 – “Living with History”: Ch. 5

August 13 – Movies & Theology: “Star Wars”

August 20 – (informal): A Visit to Ecuador w/Fr. Jim

August 27 – A Visit to the Exhibition Hall of General Convention

ST. BEDE'S VESTRY & STAFF

RECTOR: The Very Rev. James Newman

ASSISTANT: The Rev. Argola Haynes

ASSISTING: The Rev. Giles Asbury,
the Rev John Hancock, the Rev. Howard Happ, Ph.D.

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Mr. Frank Basile

MSY INTERN: Ms. Vicki Mouradian

SEXTON: Mr. Masoud Jamneshan

VESTRY

Ruth Nicastro ('04) - Senior Warden

Paul Thompson ('05) - Junior Warden

Connor Winston ('06) - Clerk

Tom Ledsam—Treasurer

Gordon Fuglie ('05) Karen Kuchel ('04)

Mike Olsen ('06) Mark Scott ('04)

Samira Tamer ('05) Joelle Underwood ('06)

DELEGATES/ALTERNATES TO CONVENTION

Dennis Winston (D)/Angus Mackay (A) - ('04)

Annette Graw (D)/Kyle Ferstead (A) - ('05)