



DIOCESAN DIGEST

for Central Pennsylvania

March 14, 2011

FROM THE DESK OF.....

BISHOP NATHAN BAXTER

Dear Sisters & Brothers;

I begin my series on pastoral issues questions for which I have received inquiries over recent years. This edition addresses the question "Is Baptism required for reception of Holy Communion?" The short answer is "yes it is required." This is according to the Episcopal Church's Constitution and Canons: I:17.7, "No unbaptized person shall be eligible to receive Communion in this Church."

The question is often phrased as "open communion or not", and is often requested as an evangelism tool---an aspect of "radical hospitality"---a characteristic consistent with the Episcopal Church's culture of "All Are Welcomed". Others argue for this "open communion" with the perspective that it is the Lord's Table, not ours to determine who should or not partake. However, it is important to remember that scripture and tradition teach us that while the larger experience of worship is public, the sacrament is a time when those who in varying degree have submitted to prior sacrament of faith, have been or are being instructed about the gravity of this sacred meal. There is something very "cultic" about Holy Communion that is in itself an evangelist experience...to be in the presence of persons sharing the power of action and belief draws persons towards learning and experiencing this expression of the holy. While we do not require I.D. of persons who present themselves, or persons who may be drawn to receive, it is our teaching that baptism and instruction or formation is expected for reception. With this knowledge even the persons who beyond the stated invitation (all baptized persons regardless of denomination are welcomed to receive--or some form of this invitation) present themselves are informed that the draw of the Spirit to receive is not an invitation to a free meal but to submit to the religious preparation and prior sacrament to enter fully into the community, its fellowship and sacred gifts (body and blood). Whether we are talking about the communion table, ordained ministry, or sharing in the mission of the church, it all belongs to God. However, our Catholic Faith is that the Church IS the steward of God's gifts. The standards which empower, engender respect, and affirm the efficacy of God's gifts all are entrusted to the Church, the Body of God's Christ.

I would also add a note about children and receiving communion. Too often I perceive that reception of communion is approached either as a political right of young children and/or something that is cute and therefore appropriate. I cannot stress too strongly that children must not be forced to receive; they must also be carefully taught to receive by caring instruction appropriate to their age; and those accompanying them at the altar must model for them by the devotion of their (sponsor or parent) reception. The parent, grandparent, or sponsor is the principle teacher, guided by the priest

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UPCOMING EVENTS...March 17-May 1

- Mar 17** 7pm Celebration of New Ministry and Installation of The Rev. Chris Pyles, St. John's, Bellefonte
- Mar 19-20** Bishop visits Good Shepherd, Hawk Run & St. Paul's, Philipsburg
- Mar 23** Archdeacon Solbak at Bangor Church, Churchtown
- Mar 24-31** Bishop to attend House of Bishops
- Apr 1** Deadline for Nominations by Petition
- Apr 3** Bp. Creighton visits All Saints, Hanover
- Apr 3** Bp. Baxter visits St. Thomas, Lancaster
- Apr 3** 6pm Evensong for Haiti, St. Andrew's, State College
- Apr 4-5** Bishop at Union of Black Episcopalians Young Pastors Consultation at Virginia Seminary, Alexandria, VA
- Apr 6** Celebration of New Ministry and Installation of The Rev. Stephen Swift, St. Benedict's, New Freedom (So. York Co.)
- Apr 7** 10am Council of Trustees Meeting at the Diocesan Office
- Apr 10** Bishop visits St. Paul's, Wellsboro
- Apr 14** 9am Commission on Ministry & Standing Committee
- Apr 16** 9am-3:30pm Warden & Vestry Leaders Conference at Trinity Pro Cathedral, Williamsport
- Apr 17** Palm Sunday - Bishop at Trinity Pro Cathedral, Wport
- Apr 19** 10am Renewal of Ordination Vows & Clergy & Spouse Lunch, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Harrisburg
- Apr 21** Bishop at Christ Church, Williamsport for Maundy Thursday services
- Apr 23** Easter Vigil at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Bp. Baxter celebrating, Cn. Ted Babcock preaching
- Apr 24** Easter Sunday - Bishop at St. Stephen's Cathedral
- Apr 21—Apr 25** Diocesan Office closed for Easter Break
- Apr 29-30** Bishop to Dioc. of W. NY for consecration of Rev. Dr. Bill Franklin as Bishop
- May 1** Bishop visits St. John's, Carlisle

If you have an event of interest to the Diocese that you would like to have listed on the Diocesan website calendar, please contact the Diocese at officemailbox@diocesecpa.org or 888-236-5959

From the Desk of Bishop Baxter (cont. from left)

or deacon of the parish. Simple matters such as how to hold their hands for reception, how to respond (e.g. "amen") upon being presented the elements, and to consume rather than to play with the "Jesus cookie" as some have referred. It takes time and patience to teach and model for our children and they will not always get it right on a given Sunday. That's o.k. But we must be gently and caringly consistent that approaching the altar is a special and sacred experience of divine and communal love.

I welcome any questions or thoughts you may find helpful on this topic. Next edition will address "What constitutes full adult membership in the Episcopal Church"; particularly we will consider confirmation/reception and adult persons joining congregations from other denominations.

Peace & Grace, +Nathan

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS...

The Rev. Eduardo Guerra passed away peacefully on Tuesday, March 15th of kidney failure at the Williamsport Home, surrounded by loving friends. His memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 26th.

Scott Haviland, the brother of Deacon Priscilla Ginolfi, died recently. He leaves a wife and 3 children.

Thomas Kerr, father of The Rev. Lauri Kerr, has recently been diagnosed with lung cancer.

The Rev. Jack Hoffer, Deacon, who is recovering from knee replacement surgery.

The Rev. Jane Miron, Deacon, who is recovering from recent eye surgery.

The Rev. Ron Lynch, retired of Lewistown, who is at home recovering from injuries received in a fall.

Sandi Imboden, as she continues with cancer treatments.

The Rev. Tom Gregg, father of The Rev. Rowena Gibbons and a retired Episcopal priest, who has brain cancer.

Maddie Letsche, Acolyte at St. Luke's, Altoona, who continues treatment and physical therapy for Image Negative Transverse Myelitis.

The Rev. Erica Wood, Retired Rector of St. Luke's, Mt. Joy, as she continues cancer treatment.

Bob Rose, who continues his cancer battle.

HOLY WEEK APPEAL FOR JAPAN

Bishop Baxter has asked that all parishes consider an appeal during their Holy Week services to support the relief and recovery efforts in Japan. The offering collected at the Renewal of Ordination Vows service on Holy Tuesday in Harrisburg has been designated for Japan.

As you are aware, on March 11th a massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake, centered off the east coast of Japan's largest island, Hokkaido, triggered a tsunami that devastated large areas of the east coast of Japan. The tsunami measured 33 feet in height in places.

Our diocese has had many years of close relationship with Japan, including a companion relationship with the Diocese of Kita Kanto. Buildings in Kita Kanto, including 3 parish buildings, sustained damage from the earthquake, but they were not affected by the tsunami. Much of the devastation has happened in the Diocese of Tohoku. Our thoughts & prayers are with the people of Japan.

The Japan Earthquake Response Fund has been opened by Episcopal Relief and Development to collect donations for emergency relief provided through local partners in Japan and other affected areas. Checks should be made out to *The Diocese of Central PA* with the notation "*ERD Japan Earthquake Response Fund*" in the memo line. You may either give your check to your parish, who will send it to the diocese, or you may mail it directly to PO Box 11937, Harrisburg, PA 17108. The diocesan office will forward all amounts received on to ERD.

May God be praised for your generosity.

ARE YOU ON SKYPE?

Effective immediately we are "collecting" Skype addresses in order to promote communications between the Diocese and Parishes, and amongst Parishes. Those who have already used Skype to "attend" a meeting at the Diocese know how valuable this tool can be.

If you are not yet aware of Skype, want to know more about it or how to get it, please contact Bill at the Diocesan Office (wgraffius@diocesecpa.org, or 717.236.5959). The 5.0 (or higher) version of Skype that we are using is a free download.

Our goal is to create a directory of Skype accounts to share with all of you so you will have video as well as audio ability to "talk" with each other and with us. It allows face-to-face contact without travel or telephone expense.

Please send us the following information in order for us to begin our Skype directory:

Name

Email address

Telephone number

Skype name

You can download Skype to your computer; create a Skype account; contact the Diocesan via our Skype name at *ediocesecpa* (just as written) and ask to link with us. Alternatively, call us with your information and we will help set up the account with you.

LANCASTER CONVOCATION YOUTH EVENTS

Maunder Thursday-Good Friday

St. John's Episcopal Church Parish Hall
321 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster

April 21st

Youth Convocation Lock-In

7:30pm Maunder Thursday Service & Foot-washing
9:00pm Lock-In begins. Includes *agape* feast, a fun, church-style "Minute to Win-it" and a chance to explore your faith in a deeper way. Don't forget your sleeping bag, pillow, toothbrush, toothpaste. And *bring a friend!*

April 22nd 7:00am

Youth Good Friday Service

This special service includes dramatic reading and miming to portray the passion narrative

RSVP to Mary Ellen Kilp at mekilp@yahoo.com

LENTEN MEDITATIONS ONLINE

Lenten Meditation podcasts continue at www.diocesecpa.org.

March 17 *Gospel Discipleship*

The Rev. Cn. David Lovelace

March 24 *Thanksgiving: Your Lenten Discipline*

The Rev. Cn. Greg Hinton

March 31 *Peregrination - Journeying through Lent*

The Rev. Cn. Stephen Casey

April 7 *Go Ahead - Take a Chance*

The Rev. Cn. Marjorie Menaul

If you have news or announcements of diocesan interest to include in the Diocesan Digest, please contact Carolyn Joy Patterson at cpatterson@diocesecpa.org