

# ST. STEPHEN'S WITNESS

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## FROM THE RECTOR

Those who have read this newsletter for some years know that I am a principled opponent of the Christian Right. I am a 'principled' opponent of the Christian Right because my objection is not that my own ox is being gored by it. That is, on most of the moral issues about which the Christian Right is concerned there is little or no space between my opinions and theirs. My objection is rather to what Karl Barth called 'hyphenated Christianity' ('German Christianity'; 'Marxist Christianity'; etc.). When the faith is too closely identified with an ideology, partisan political positions, or debatable judgements about matters of public policy, the faith is reduced and made offensive to people who might otherwise be attracted. The Church and the clergy should teach the Christian faith, including of course its moral dimension. Then laymen should be left to implement that faith and to attempt to apply it in the often complex and confusing world of legislation, public life, and political debate.

I have on occasion pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious Left. I recall vividly a statement from one mainline Protestant body critical of the religious Right. Shortly thereafter that body had as a keynote speaker at their national convention Andy Young, who delivered himself of a blistering, partisan, and warmly-received attack on the Republicans.

The hypocrisy of selective mixing of Christianity and partisan politics on the level of prudential policy judgements reminds me of two things that should be said about the Christian Right. First, the Christian Right was a late development and perceived itself to be mainly defensive. While the Social Gospel and Christian Socialist movements already were active as a religious Left in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, American Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians were self-consciously and deliberately apolitical into the 1970s. These religious groups were politicized partly in reaction against what they saw as developments in the nation which were hostile to their beliefs and, in particular, which threatened their ability to pass along their faith to their own children. The banishment of prayer from the public schools, the rise of the drug culture, the sexual revolution, and the perception that the public schools often mixed incompetence and secularism, all created worry. That worry in turned allowed for the rise of politicized religious leaders and of political leaders willing to appeal to or, depending on one's perspective, pander to, the worried religious voters. Some observers see the key event in the rise of the religious Right as a proposal among education bureaucrats in the Carter administration to remove tax exempt status from all private school founded after *Brown versus Board of Education* in the 1950s. The idea that conservative Christian schools throughout the nation would suddenly be treated as morally suspect segregation academies to be officially discouraged and taxed led, on this view, to a defensive turn to the political Right. People thought they were acting to protect their children, churches, and schools.

The second thing I note about the religious Right is that it has been a rather comprehensive failure in terms of positive political achievements. The opponents of the Christian Right speak as if the United States were on the verge of Taliban rule. It is true that the religious Right has chalked up many supposed electoral successes. But the people so elected seem to be remarkably ineffective. When people speak in my presence of the dangerous power of the religious Right, I regularly ask them to name one important matter of public policy concerning which the supposed political power of the religious Right has reversed policy. No one has been able to name anything. There is an *impression* of political influence which is mostly false. It is true that the religious Right has slowed, though not stopped, some leftward or secularist or permissive drift in the nation's policies. The complete normalization of homosexuality is an example. But the religious Right has utterly failed in its basic agenda. Prayer in the public schools still is banned. Abortion is still legal everywhere, even in the third trimester. While is now is against federal law to let a child die who was intended for abortion but safely born anyway, the law provides for no penalties and is widely ignored. The only checks on sexual permissiveness seem to flow from venereal diseases and a kind of sin-sickness, while public policy and the news media and entertainment worlds resist virtually any restraint. Public education remains much as it was, except maybe more so.

In the end I think there will be no Christian Right influence on public policy as that policy effects people not on the Christian Right. Nobody has been made positively to do anything by the Christian Right, and nobody will be made positively to do anything by the Christian Right. What the Christian Right has achieved is a certain toleration and space for its own institutions. The federal and state governments have neither closed down nor taxed religious schools nor seriously restricted the home schooling movement. Churches remain exempt from income taxes. Religious broadcasting and publishers and a kind of parallel religious culture flourish. Parents are free to teach their children as they please, or at least to resist with some powerful allies the obnoxious influences of the secular culture. The Western European drift towards what John Paul II calls the culture of death is at least resisted here. These accomplishments are, in my opinion, real and good for all of us. While I opposed and oppose the attempt to imposed a non-existent 'Christian' view of defense and economic policy, I am glad for the influence conservative Christians have insofar as it protects the private sphere and the mediating institutions of our culture – churches, schools, families, and the like. There is much wrong with the religious Right. But it has brought some good as well, and the downside is wildly exaggerated.

## NOTES

– **Easter Attendance:** Easter Vigil, 60; Easter Day at 9 a.m., 43; Easter Day at 11 a.m., 170.

– Many thanks to those who helped at the **work day** on March 19<sup>th</sup>; to the **choir** and Mr. Coscarelli for the wonderful music throughout Holy Week and especially for the Weber Mass setting on Easter Day; to the **Marcums** and **Nellie Herringdine** for gifts to support the music at those same times; to the **flower committee** for beautiful Easter flowers at the altars, the Pascal candle, the pulpit, and in the window boxes; and to the **servers** who showed up faithfully to help provide help to the clergy. Thanks also to **Frank and LeAnne Berry** for their extra efforts to get repairs done by Easter.

– Christian Roofing will begin **roofing the church** during Easter Week. This project, which already was needed, was made urgent by wind damage during Lent. The cost for the roof is ca. \$15,000, of which \$2,000 has been given or pledged. Further gifts would be welcome. There were be some additional costs to paint and repair the church tower at the same time.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Operating income: Jan & Feb total for 2004, \$30,791 Jan & Feb total for 2005, \$ 36,436  
Operating expenses: Jan & Feb total for 2004, \$40,333 Jan & Feb total for 2005, \$ 38,942  
Gifts to other funds (including pass-through amounts) in Jan & Feb: \$ 10,832

In March the parish signed a contract to rent our kitchen beginning in March to a caterer for \$ 1,100 per month (of which \$400 is figured to be reimbursement for increased use of utilities). We hope that the caterer will generate further income for us through functions he caters held in our parish hall.

# CALENDAR FOR APRIL

3.	8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer .....	<i><b>EASTER I</b></i>
"	9:00 a.m. Eucharist & sermon .....	" "
"	10:00 a.m. Adult Bible study .....	" "
"	11:00 a.m. Eucharist & sermon .....	" "
"	2:00 p.m. Spanish Mass & sermon .....	" "
4.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	S. Isidore
5.	12:00 noon Eucharist .....	ANNUNCIATION (transferred)
6.	10:00 a.m. Eucharist ( <b>monthly requiem</b> ) .....	Feria
7.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	Feria
8.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	Feria
9.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	BVM on Saturday
"	1:00 p.m. <b>Inquirers' class</b> .....	" " "
10.	(Same schedule as 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) .....	<i><b>EASTER II</b></i>
11.	6:30 p.m. Eucharist .....	S. Leo
"	7:30 p.m. <b>Vestry meeting</b> .....	" "
12.	12:00 noon Eucharist .....	Feria
"	6:30 p.m. <b>Men's dinner</b> .....	" "
13.	10:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	Patronage of S. Joseph
14.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	S. Justin Martyr
15.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	Feria
16.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	BVM on Saturday
"	1:00 p.m. <b>Inquirers' Class</b> .....	" " "
17.	(Same schedule as 3 <sup>rd</sup> ) .....	<i><b>EASTER III</b></i>
18.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	Feria
19.	12:00 noon Eucharist .....	S. Alphege
20.	10:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	Feria
21.	10:00 a.m. <b>Holy Baptism</b> (Dylan Thomas Davis) .....	S. Anselm
"	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	" "
22.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	S. George
23.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	Vigil of S. James
24.	(Same schedule as 3 <sup>rd</sup> , with Solemn High Mass at 11 a.m.) .....	<i><b>EASTER IV</b></i>
25.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	S. MARK
26.	12:00 noon Eucharist .....	Feria
27.	10:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	S. Peter Canisius
28.	6:00 p.m. Eucharist .....	S. Paul of the Cross
29.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	S. Peter Martyr
30.	11:00 a.m. Eucharist .....	S. Catherine of Siena
"	1:00 p.m. <b>Inquirers' Class</b> .....	" "

(ALL CAPITALS = Prayer Book holy days. ***ALL CAPITALS IN BOLD ITALICS*** = Sundays. Morning Prayer or Evensong is said 30 minutes before each weekday Mass.)

**ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH**  
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