

The Orthodox American

Witnessing the Spirit, in the West

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Come the Jubilee

The year marking the end of the seventh cycle of sabbatical years, when the land and all things were once more placed in the hands of God.

+Francis Fontenot

From The Gulf Coast Diocese

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who were in attendance at the synod, especially for those of you remained the Sunday morning for my consecration. I wish to thank everyone who had a part in the planning and those who participated in the ceremony, it was beautiful. I also wish to thank all of you who were home praying for the synod, your prayers were certainly heard.

The new diocese is up and running and everyone seems to be doing well. Another beautiful ceremony was the elevation of Father Martin Baskin of Fort Worth to Archpriest. Father Martin received a beautiful pectoral cross from the Metropolitan Archbishop, thank you Fr. Martin for many years of service to OCCA.

My thanks are sent to Bishop +Ed, our former bishop, for his dedication and love to all of us who have served in his diocese, you will be missed. Bishop +Ed has proven to be a true servant, a wonderful priest and a very kind-hearted gentleman. May you continue to be blessed Bishop +Ed.

Blessings,
Bishop +Francis

Round'n About

Notes from the Dioceses & Vicariates

New England

+Douglas Wright

Here are my impressions of the Holy Synod. I was impressed by the high quality of the practical and inspiring workshops. I was further impressed by the obvious high quality and commitment of our clergy. As a whole we cover a lot of ground in our varied areas of competence. When Sister Kathy Ann was explaining the therapeutic value of the many turns and returns of the labyrinth, +James Gleeson piped up with the psychologist's explanation of the affect on the human brain. My jaw dropped in amazement at his detailed explanation. I was impressed by the thoughtful way the Bishops approached the screening of new candidates to the presbyterium. I was impressed by the quality of the DVD liturgy as presented by Fr. Ken and his folks. I was also relieved that despite our being cut off from the rest of the church, our liturgy here in Maine is consistent with what you all are doing.

I was most relieved and impressed with the way the Bishops are now functioning with collegiality and reach informed conclusions after everyone has spoken and had his/her say. I have participated in many non profits here in Maine and know that members of boards are held accountable for the actions of their organizations. We must 'manage' our church responsibly and within the law.

We are fortunate that the Lord has brought together in one body men and women with so much to offer, and with an eager willingness to address our needs: having a safe church policy, codifying our multitudinous liturgies, our crazy quilt of vestments, providing a creditable and meaningful prospectus for clerical studies, and a whole raft of just folks who worked hard to make this synod happen.

I wish the monastics had more time together, I am sorry, truly sorry that so many more of our wonderful clergy couldn't come. I am also sorry that we will have to wait another four years, maybe we should consider a change.....?

The Pacific Coast

+James Gleeson

The high point of the Synod weekend was the ordination of our new Bishop for the Gulf Coast, the R. Rev. Francis Fontenot. My sincere felicitations and fondest wishes go to him for a long and joyful term. His new charges were delighted to have been a part of the selection process and the bishops attending the ordination were in excess of the quorum for election, making the ceremony a living expression of the Holy Spirit's continuing renewal through the ages in yet another successor to the apostles. Worthy, worthy, worthy is brother +Francis and he was splendid.

I was delighted to see the results of the selection of a new director of liturgy, the V. Rev. Ken Waibel, and to appreciate the excellence and depth of his insights in the field of liturgy.

I was also delighted and given an emotional boost by the presentation of Bishop Wright with his well-crafted and witty format. He is indeed a master of nuance and the pregnant pause.

No words are adequate to describe the insights and the emotional depths given by Fr. Doug Smith in his presentation, the Wounded Healer. His inexplicably healing and valuable talk, .has inspired me to both purchase his book and renew my own intentions and directions.

And again thanks to Mother Laura Emerson for having made one of the longest trips to the synod and the effort and expense that entailed. And Rt. Rev Jerry Hegarty great regretted not being able to join the Jubilee.

My final joy in our gathering was seeing the great efforts of the brother and sisters who worked tirelessly to make the event worthwhile and truly a celebration. My special thanks to Mothers MariaAlene VanFalkenburg and John North and Fathers Cliff Polubinski and Thomas North for all their hard work. And of course to everyone, too numerous to mention, who contributed to the weekend. Congratulations to all who came together for the success of our Synod

Western Great Lakes and the OCCA Pastoral Theology Institute

Bishop David Kotajavari:

Chicago

Vicar Donn Mielke:

Kentucky

Vicar Kenneth Waibel:

Ohio

Vicar Kevin Kearney:

New York and the Atlantic Coast

Bishop Elizabeth Walker:

Great Plains

+Edmund Kubiak

The delegation from Great Plains, Frs. Martin Baskin, Michael Sherbert and I met at my home in Belleville and due to the bishop's back issues, Fr. Michael was designated to drive most of the way

The synod began with an unofficial meeting of the monastics, but things seemed to me to actually kick off with the ordination of Martin Baskin+ as archpriest. Kevin Kearney+ would have been ordained at this time but due to his wife's illness his honor was bestowed at a private ceremony on Friday afternoon. Rather than the Benedictine Inn in Indianapolis, Frs. Martin, Sherbert and I stayed "off campus" at a Motel 6 in nearby Beech Grove. All the synod's liturgies: morning and evening prayers and of course the Eucharistic liturgies were quite blessed and personally much enjoyed by myself, but I'm of a liturgical bent anyway.

An abundance of meetings and talks, all quite productive, filled out the time, from brief presentations on antimimension designs by Fr. Duncan and Sherbert to those by Bishop Douglas Wright, Archimandrite Ken Waibel, Fr. Barry Lillis and Mother MariaAlene, who all gave enlightening talks on their ministries. Rev. Alice Mann gave the main presentation, speaking on the organization and development of small churches. Other topics heard were Wounded Healers given by Fr. Doug Smith (a very healthy and gratifying talk) and Sr. Kathy Ann of the Benedictine Inn and its religious community, gave a funny, personal and informative talk about the Labyrinth. While there is a labyrinth on the grounds of the Inn, the high temperatures through the weekend meant that some of us despite a desire to walk it could not. CDs were distributed with updated clergy directories and new liturgies and there was a DVD available with a video of a Eucharistic Liturgy.

On Sunday morning our closing liturgy was the ordination of +Francis Fontenot as bishop of the newly formed Diocese of the Gulf Coast. All of Great Plains diocese wish love, peace, joy and the grace of our Almighty Father, Holy Son and gracious Holy Spirit to Bishop Francis and to all who served with me who are now entrusted into the new bishop's care. Yours truly was also celebrating a not-so-milestone birthday and was happily surprised by the entire congregation's singing "Happy Birthday" for my special day.

Frs. Martin, Michael and I traveled back together after the synod. From my front door I sent them both on their ways to their respective homes, but after so much good company and socializing during the weekend, Muffin and I felt quite lonely by ourselves then in the house.

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Peter's Two Pence

> Here at the "home office," we're still picking up after the Synod. It is amazing how much "stuff" got schlepped back and forth between Indy and Fort Wayne. There's work to be done to tie it all together, and you can look forward to a report about the Acts and Activities of the Synod in the mail next week.

I want to thank everyone who came to the Synod. Thank you. We had a great time, and it is not an overstatement to say that participants went away feeling energized. Very much so. Everyone was civil and lighthearted. What a great bunch of folk.

Thank you also to those who took away gently used church goods. I chuckled when I saw that chains, crosses, and other such items were the first to disappear. But then, Al, from whom most of those came, had some terrific "treasures." I'm glad they will see a new life. As Maria and I were unpacking, I was amazed at the number of items we had--dozens of icons, many garments of various kinds, and even a tabernacle (which went to Chicago, I think). Many of the tarnish marks will disappear with good polish and careful storage and TLC--so if you have a chalice, paten, candlestand, or other metal object, check on what kind of care it should receive. The ruby glass 7-day vigil lamp holder was taken; that's a bargain--ruby glass is the most expensive of the glass lamp holders, and it's glass, not that modern, unbreakable stuff.

Many of the participants at the Synod recommended that we meet more often than every four years. Others thought a retreat might be a good idea, too, either annually or alternating with synods. So far nobody has voiced opposition to those ideas, and so barring a strenuous objection, we'll be looking at those for the future. Your suggestions are welcome. Oh yes, it was said that we can have synods or retreats on cruise ships...and that's true. Probably a cruise is better for synods than retreats, but I contemplate God when at the seashore, so maybe....

peace to tired but happy OCCAns everywhere.

>> Peter

BOOK REVIEW:

Oral World and Written Word, Ancient Israelite Literature,
Susan Niditch, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

This slim volume, part of Library of Ancient Israel series, is a must to anyone seeking an understanding of the many controversies around the Hebrew Bible of current critical studies.

First Niditch began with a definition of oral vs. literate societies describing the genuine differences, not just in reliance of oral tradition rather than written documents, but in the attitudes toward history and its transmission. The first myth shattered is that there is this great divide, one side illiterate, uncouth, simple and unsophisticated and the other being literate, refined, complex, and sophisticated. For this Niditch only had to point to some of the great pieces of western lit, The Iliad, The Odyssey, Beowulf, the Widsith, Irish, Turkish and Bosnian sagas, all poems of extraordinary length, with complex plots, and sophisticated character development.

Second there will be varying degrees of oral and literate aspects within a society. Even in Roman times, a high point of literacy, perhaps 5% of the population could fluently read **and write**, (an important and distinct skill from reading), another 10% might have read simple texts, invoices or tax lists, while another 15% might have managed to write their name and recognize significant words. Regardless of the literacy of the elite, until the 19th & 20th centuries, the bulk of the humanity depended on oral report. Attitude towards written text would also vary, from awe as magic, such as on a 8th Century BC amulet inscribed on silver foil with a variant of Nu 6:24-26 and rolled up to wear as a bead found in a grave in Jerusalem or as a protective amulet, the mezuzah on the door. Sometimes written text was only a aid to memory for a longer oral performance, finally to reach a point where written text was authoritative, used for land tenure, judgments and laws, standing above oral tradition. In fact, such modern distinctions as poetry vs. prose, or precise textual agreement are not seen in oral society, where prose may be seen as shortened form and wide variation within a single piece seen as elaboration or condensation as suited the audience hearing it.

Further, oral pieces have features, identifying traits, reiteration, formulaic expression, stylized motif, epithets and mnemonic devices, as seen in genealogies, where every fifth generation is tagged with a characteristic, both to spur memory, but to keep blocks of the genealogy sorted.

These are important in approaching the Hebrew Bible and Israelite literature, because the questions of who wrote what book and when was it written are modern biases imposed on ancient words. The earliest portions of the Bible are oral tradition, chanted or sang transmitting significant data, as the Iliad did with the location and description of the 12th Century BC fortress, Troia/Ilios/Wilusa that Homer described with accurate detail in a 9th Century BC composition that wasn't transcribed (passed by the scribe) and 'regularized' until the 7th or 6th Century BC. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls with their variant readings of texts, it had been overlooked that the Septuagint as a 2nd Century BC translation with its variants was a thousand years older than the Hebrew text regularized by the Masoretes, 8th to

10th Century AD. Oral compositions do not match in line by line consistently, which is a very modern demand of ancient expression

Besides the documentary thesis of J, E, P & Dtr, there are clearly identified portions of much older material, for example the popular epic of David as the renegade of the Negev, leading royal Saul and his men in circles, which incidentally has correct 10th Century BC place names not known by 7th Century annalist, but were dutifully transcribed into the texts which became the Hebrew Bible. Of course, the annalist's Hebrew wasn't 12th Century BC, neither the annalist nor the readers for whom he/she compiled texts could have read it, but the attention grabbing, exciting oral histories about the Patriarchs, Judges and rogues who became king, like David, learned and repeated for generations had to be included.

When a clearer view of *orality*, as Niditch had coined the term, is achieved then much of the clamor of the Hebrew Bible controversies resolve to this, we moderns, dependent on written characters have lost our understanding and appreciation of the ancient ability to speak meaningfully in poetry, metaphor, and saga of our past from one generation to the next.

Footnotes in History

Theodore of Tarsus, b. 602, saw great upheaval in the Byzantine wars that lost Antioch, Jerusalem, and Damascus to the Persians and was himself held captive at 11 years old. At the age of 35, an Eastern monk, he fled with other religious refugees from the Arab conquests to a small Eastern monastery near Rome.

When Wighard the English bishop sent by the kings of Kent and Northumbria to be consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury died before the ceremony, the learned Theodore at 66 years old was consecrated in his stead and the monk from the eastern frontier went to the farthest reaches of western Christianity.

When Theodore arrived, he found the church of Britain deeply divided between the Roman missionaries of Augustine and the native Celtic Christians who had held fast to their faith in the face of the pagan English invasions and kept its ancient customs in the face of Roman pressure.

Sensitive to all sides, Theodore opened a school at Canterbury and choose Adrian, an African from Theodore's old monastery as its head. It was a school for both English and Celts to study Latin and Greek. He reorganized the Church of Britain, compiled its first code of canon law, and revitalized its worship with Eastern texts and introduced for the first time in the West, the Litany of the Saints.

Bede wrote that Theodore was the first archbishop of all Britain. Theodore died in 690 at the age of 88, having done much to heal the British Church leaving a lasting legacy of the East in Western Christianity.

Your Thought Here: this space available, not for ads, but for exchange of your research, opinions and views as well as rebuttals to any item of TOA which has ruffled feathers.

Working in the Vineyard

Rt. Rev. Jerry Hegarty, is after two stints as bishop of California, comfortably and so he assures permanently retired once more enjoying the warm southern beach weather of Ventura with his cat, Babette.

From beginning his teaching career in a one room K-8 school in Iowa in 1950, Bishop Jerry has been educating and forming people, not only school age youth in the classroom, but active military personnel from IN to AK, and finally the clergy in this sprawling diocese of California, which stretches north to south as far as it is from Valdosta, GA to Atlantic City NJ on the *other* coast. Ordained by +Alfred after retiring in 1989 after thirty years as a school administrator at Pleasant Valley School in CA, Jerry was then consecrated bishop and participated in the OCCA decision to open priestly orders to women. After dutifully fulfilling his term, he retired, yet when the diocese fell vacant after his first retirement, with his usual Irish tenacity, just a shade short of stubborn, he came back, not with a vengeance, but with a sure and steady hand, counseling, forming, and leading his flock until another teacher was ready to take the helm and as pastor and guide.

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Opinions and Viewpoints