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Diocesan Digest

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A Note from the Editor

*By the Rev. Canon Isaac J. Rehberg,
Rector, All Saints Anglican Church, San Antonio, TX*

This issue begins with an important message from our bishop on two common problems in the Church today: the so-called “Prosperity Gospel” and the rejection of holiness and God’s Law in antinomianism. Even if you have already read this message from the bishop, it is a good reminder in these troubled times. Second, we have two new series in our newsletter. The first is Canon Mark Wilson’s exegetical notes on St. Luke’s Gospel. We hope that Canon Wilson’s notes may aid you in your own study of the Third Gospel. The second new series is my own “Liturgy Lessons” series, in which I will provide some exhortations and short explanations of different aspects of our Anglican liturgical tradition. Finally, we have the latest update from the church planting efforts in San Antonio. As a reminder, remember that we are always looking for submissions from any of our parishes, whether they are news items, short essays, or anything of interest for the diocese. We want to hear from you!



A Word from the Bishop

*By the Rt. Rev. Dr. Felix C. Orji, OSB,
Ordinary, Anglican Diocese of the West*

The “Prosperity Gospel” And Antinomian Heresies are Not Permitted in our Diocese



No clergy, catechist, lay reader, or guest preacher is permitted to preach “prosperity gospel” in the Diocese of the West (CANA). Bishop Felix Orji, OSB.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

As your Bishop, I must address some important matters relative to our Diocese and ask that you please give these messages your utmost attention.

First, I expect clergy and catechists in the Diocese to preach the Bible. It is God's Word to his Church, and the Church belongs to God, not us. As Alistair Begg rightly said, "It is impossible to grow in grace as God intends when you neglect the Word of God." So, we must feed the flock of God with the Word of God. You are therefore charged to remember these three points:

1. It is your responsibility to study the Bible text and ensure that your preaching of it conforms to its literary, historical, and theological context;
2. As a member of the clergy, it is your job to preach the whole counsel of God rather than your favorite topics or sections of the Bible. That's what you vowed to do at your ordination; and
3. It is not your job to entertain or tickle the eyes and ears of your congregation with false teaching or programs simply because that might make them feel good. Don't forget that you will have to give an answer to God about your ministry.

All clergy (Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons) made vows at their ordination to preach the Bible. Catechists and Lay Readers made vows at their commissioning services to do the same. Thus, all of us are under obligation to do so. It is not faithful, Christian ministry to avoid preaching the full counsel of God which includes bible passages that call us to trust God for his grace and blessings as well as bible passages that call us to obey his commands. Preaching "prosperity gospel" which is no gospel at all is not biblical, or faithful, or Christian ministry. Priests or Bishops who engage in such ministry must correct themselves. And if they refuse to repent and change their ways then they will be presented with charges of heresy, hindering the work of God, violating their ordination vows, and of behavior causing scandal in the Church.

Prosperity gospel has become a popular tool in today's secular world. But it is not of the Bible. British professor of sociology Stephen Hunt explains:

In the forefront (of this type of teaching) is the doctrine of the assurance of "divine" physical health and prosperity through faith. In short, this means that "health and wealth" are the automatic divine right of all Bible-believing Christians and may be procreated by faith as part of the package of salvation, since the Atonement of Christ includes not just the removal of sin, but also the removal of sickness and poverty.

Prosperity gospel asserts that it is God's will to bless you with good health, happiness, wealth, and anything you believe you must have if you have enough faith to trust God and decree it by your spoken words. Worse than that heretical assertion is that if you don't have enough faith to decree those things into existence you will not receive such blessings.

Prosperity gospel misrepresents God and promotes greed and materialism. It puts our personal needs above our spiritual needs; above the worship of God and his true mission. It is biblically untrue, pastorally cruel, and misdirects people from Christ and his saving gospel to personal well-being. It turns our relationship with God into a quid pro quo relationship wherein God gives to us according to how much we give him—a total denial of saving grace from a gracious God who loved us and saved us when we hated him.

Let me be clear: God wants to bless us in many ways but sometimes he allows us to go through suffering for our own good and for the sake of others. That's what he did to the Apostle Paul, our Lord Jesus Christ, the martyrs, and Christians across the centuries, despite their strong faith and faithfulness. It is biblical to pray for healing and blessings, trusting God to bless us in accordance with his

providence. It is not biblical to teach that God is obligated to prosper you with wealth, health, and happiness because you have enough faith. This has done much damage to individuals in the body of Christ.

Therefore, no clergy, catechist, lay reader, or guest preacher is permitted to preach “prosperity gospel” in our Diocese. As I have done, Archbishop Nicholas Okoh has condemned these actions a number of times. I thank you for paying attention to this directive.

Second, biblical orthodoxy without godly discipline, principled behavior, civility, genuine love, godly behavior, and respect for one another—

irrespective of race, tribe, and nationality - poses great danger for the well-being, unity, holiness, and mission of the Church. As Peter the Apostle admonished:

Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more

*diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.”
(2 Peter 1:5-10.)*

Finally, I don't think it's a terribly bad idea for Christian leaders to be humble and respectful. We must be humble enough to obey God's Word. Humble enough to obey the Canons and Constitutions of the Diocese and Province. And humble enough to follow the leadership of the Bishop in all things lawful and honest. Scripture

enjoins us in Hebrews 13:17 to:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls,

as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Lack of humility for whatever reason is sinful and should not be present amongst believers, especially Christian leaders. Sin is sin! If we condemn homosexuality because it is sinful then we must also condemn pride and arrogance because they are sinful. We cannot condemn one but allow the other because it is convenient for us. That is called conceit and we can do much better than that by the grace given us in Christ.

He who has ears to hear let him hear! I love you all.

Warm Regards,

The Rt. Rev'd Dr. Felix Orji, OSB
Diocesan Bishop
Anglican Diocese of the West

“ Prosperity gospel has become a popular tool in today's secular world. But it is not of the Bible ”



Exegetical Notebook – Luke 1:1-4

By the Rev. Canon Mark D. Wilson
Rector, St. Patrick's Church, Las Cruces, NM

Interpretive Questions

1. What were the things fulfilled as mentioned in Luke 1:1? Among whom were these “events” (NRSV) or “things” (NIV) fulfilled?
2. Who were the eyewitnesses in Luke 1:2?
3. What does it mean to be “servants of the word” and how is that related to being an eyewitness in Luke 1:2?
4. How did Luke undertake his investigation of this orderly account as mentioned in Luke 1:3?
5. Who is Theophilus in Luke 1:3, and why is he called “most excellent”?
6. What things was Theophilus taught in Luke 1:4, and what “truth” concerning these “things” does he need to “know”? Who taught or instructed Theophilus?
7. Why is Luke compelled to write an orderly account for Theophilus when others have undertaken to do the same as indicated in verse 1?

Initial Exegetical Insights

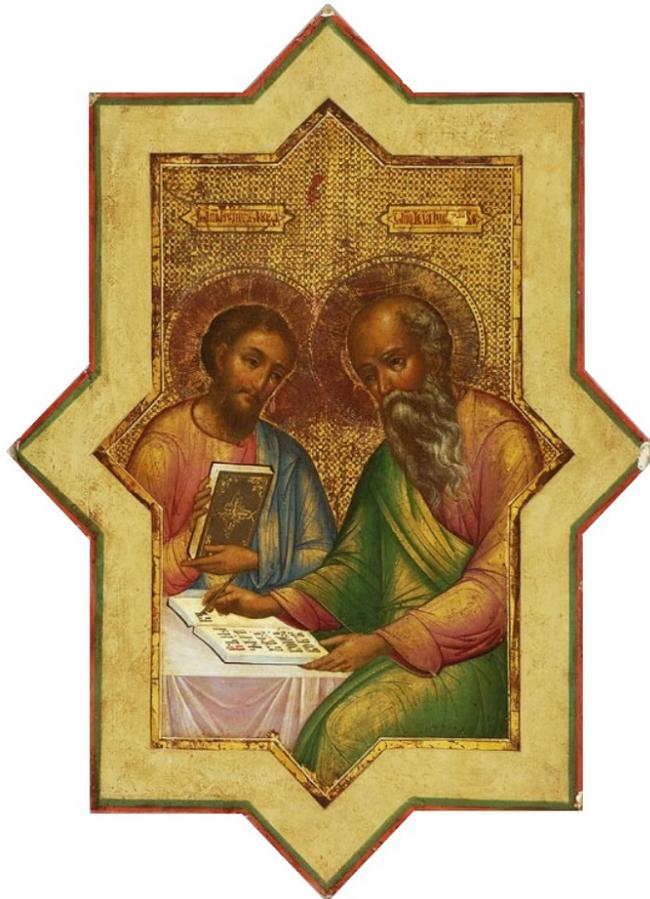
Luke is introducing an orderly account of things fulfilled. Luke’s written account includes events that he investigated and learned from eyewitnesses from the beginning. While others have undertaken to draw up an account of these things, Luke’s orderly account is intended so that Theophilus may know the truth and certainty of the things taught.

Additional Exegetical Insights from Green’s NICNT on Luke

I did not realize the initial presuppositions with which I approached the Gospel of Luke. For example, the author of Luke’s Gospel is never explicitly identified.¹

While I classified The

Gospel of Luke as historical narrative, I failed to see the author of this Gospel as the “narrator” who, not until his second volume, places himself as a character within the story he narrates.² This realization has implications for understanding the narrator, the “narratee” and the reason for this particular written orderly account of things fulfilled.³



*"Saints Evangelists Luke & John the Theologian"
National Museum in Warsaw. Public Domain.*

¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Kindle edition, 35.

² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

³ *Ibid.*

First, the narrator appears to emphasize the comprehensiveness of the investigation to support the validity of the orderly account provided.⁴ Also, the narrator appears to be part of the community of those experiencing the fulfillment of events and receiving information from earlier eyewitnesses.⁵ Second, the two volumes of this orderly account (The Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles) name Theophilus as the narratee. While I presumed this written orderly account was intended for a wider audience than Theophilus alone, I never considered the possibility that this name, meaning “lover of God,” could be symbolic for a larger audience.⁶ Theophilus, having the title “most excellent,” supports that the narratee is probably an individual with a degree of socio-political status.⁷ Could someone with such a high socio-political standing have the means and authority to support and commission a thorough investigation of handed down information? Third, this orderly account records more than the historical background for things fulfilled. Rather, the narrator wants to persuade the narratee that the information about the things fulfilled is certainly true, and the narrator does so with the interpretive perspective of a person who identifies with those who received information from earlier eyewitnesses.⁸

Exegetical Summary

Luke 1:1-4 is the beginning of an orderly account of things investigated by the author. The things investigated include events fulfilled and handed down from eyewitnesses and servants of the word to the author and other contemporaries. Among those contemporaries is the narratee of this orderly account named Theophilus who was informed about these events.

The narrator identifies with those among whom things were fulfilled and with those to whom information was handed down. The narrator's identification with this community appears to both

qualify the narrator for investigation and to provide the narrator with a degree of interpretive insight regarding the events investigated. Perhaps it is this self-identification with those who experienced and received information about these fulfilling events that make the narrator's account exceptionally distinguishable from many others' accounts. Therefore, the written orderly account that follows is intended to persuade Theophilus to be certain about the truth of the information both the narrator and narratee received because of the narrator's associations that will facilitate a comprehensive investigation.

The narratee, Theophilus, is called “most excellent” by the narrator. This title suggests Theophilus is an individual possessing a relatively high rank within a community familiar to the narrator. Such an elevated status may suggest that Theophilus instigated or sustained the narrator's investigation so that the subsequent orderly account would be shared with others.

While the narrator, or author, is not identified, an advanced reading with a cursory look at biblical introductions, study notes, and commentaries, one can discern the consensus view that Luke is the author of both this Gospel narrative and the narrative of The Acts of the Apostles. Luke's investigation entails everything, since the beginning, regarding events that have been fulfilled and handed down by early eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2-3; 3:23-37). Later, in The Book of Acts, Luke enters his narrative as a character in the events being fulfilled. The author's relationship with the Apostle Paul and his first-hand experiences of the events under investigation facilitate understanding the interconnectedness of being both eyewitnesses and servants of the word, which characterizes a community with which Luke is qualified to identify (Luke 1:2). The narrator's orderly account of the things fulfilled and investigated is so Theophilus and other readers may know the certain truth of the information received.

⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 38, 44-45.

As Luke's story unfolds, we learn from him that "narration is proclamation," and the following Gospel narrative intends to give an orderly account

of God's purposeful works in the events investigated and persuasively recorded.



St. Benedict Anglican Church Plant Update

By the Rev. Barry Kowald

Assisting Priest, All Saints Anglican Church, San Antonio, TX
Church Planter, St. Benedict Anglican Church, San Antonio, TX

On January 6, 2019, St. Benedict Anglican Church San Antonio, Texas, began weekly Wednesday evening discipleship and worship, as we embarked on Tim Keller's study, *Evangelism Studies in the Book of Acts*. Afterwards, we celebrate a said Holy Communion service using either a Saint's day or Propers from the previous Sunday. We are off to a good start with our regular families and have finally settled into a rhythm that works for our missional context.



One of the main emphases has been the establishment of a sacramental community, where we grow together in the study of God's Word and worship. We do this on Wednesday, which is a bit risky, because many people prefer to worship on Sundays and do not often participate in a midweek service. Regardless, we fully realize that Christ will build His church, and we simply need to remain

faithful and exercise a little common sense in how we advertise our effort.

Our goal in serving the west and northwest sides of San Antonio is to reach our community with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to proclaim our risen Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. We endeavor to invite the stranger into sacramental community and to function as the body of Christ, using our respective gifts to the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. To that end, we will faithfully meet every

Wednesday, at 6:30 pm, and worship on Sundays in our home parish at All Saints Anglican Church, San Antonio, Texas. I have also encouraged our plant team to feel free to visit other parishes within the archdeaconry as practicable. Conversely, we invite everyone from the archdeaconry to visit us as well. All are welcome! Grace and Peace.



Liturgy Lessons: A Case for Morning Prayer

*By the Rev. Canon Isaac J. Rehberg
Rector, All Saints Anglican Church, San Antonio, TX
Diocesan Canon for Liturgy*

According to Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of the English Reformation, one of the main purposes of the *Book of Common Prayer* was to return us to a method of prayer and Scripture reading that was common among the “ancient Fathers” of our faith:

*For they so ordered the matter, that all the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) should be read over once every year; intending thereby that the Clergy, and especially such as were Ministers in the congregation, should (by often reading, and meditation in God’s word) be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able to exhort others by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the truth; and further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true Religion.
(Abp. Cranmer: “Concerning the Service of the Church”)*

It may come as a surprise to modern Anglicans, but the main vehicle for Abp. Cranmer’s vision of returning to Patristic simplicity was not Sunday Communion. Rather, it was the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. Indeed, prior to the middle of the Twentieth Century, it was rare to find parishes that celebrated Communion weekly; the principle Sunday worship service was Morning Prayer (also called “Matins” in the Prayer Book). Through daily Morning and Evening Prayer, the priests were to proclaim the entire counsel of

Scripture in the context of communal (i.e., “common”) prayer.

Unfortunately, the discipline of praying the Offices has fallen into widespread disuse, even among clergy. While I would never suggest replacing weekly Communion with Matins, here are a few reasons to incorporate Morning Prayer into your individual and parish lives:

1. Jesus and the Apostles did it.

Throughout the Gospels and Acts, we see our Lord and his Apostles taking time out of their days to pray. Often this was specifically “at the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1) or some similar set time. This was, of course, in keeping with the Jewish custom of the day, traditionally corresponding to the time of the daily Temple sacrifices in the Old Testament. The Church simply adopted this custom to her own use.

2. It is an ideal vehicle for devotional Scripture reading.

As discussed above, our Anglican practice has been to read most of the Bible each year through the Daily Offices. In both Morning and Evening Prayer, we read an Old Testament lesson, a New Testament lesson, and a selection from the Psalms every day. Traditionally, the Psalms were recited in such a way as to read or sing through the entire Psalter each month. Furthermore, the Canticles prayed or sung in each service are additional texts from the Bible or important extrabiblical Christian works. By using Morning Prayer for our daily devotional Scripture reading, we will get to know the Bible better from simple repetition. The Psalms especially will become part of the way we think about and approach everything in life.

3. You are praying and reading Scripture with the whole Church.

Even if your parish cannot offer Morning Prayer each day, by using Matins privately or in small groups, you will be joining with thousands and millions of other Anglicans and other Christians in prayer each day. Imagine the benefits to parish life when most of a congregation is reading the same passages from the Bible each day, discussing them in families, over coffee during the fellowship hour, or even at the water cooler with coworkers!

4. The canons require it for clergy.

If you are a deacon, priest, or bishop, the canons of the Church have always required you to pray the Offices. In Cranmer's day, it was required to be done at the parish, not just privately. This requirement is both for our own edification as clergy, and for the benefit of our flocks. If we are not in prayer and in the bible, how can we expect to be effective shepherds of God's people?

5. It is good for evangelism.

Holy Communion is necessarily a "family meal." We cannot allow non-baptized to the Lord's Table. But Morning Prayer is automatically "seeker-friendly." Anyone can participate in the Daily Offices. In fact, choral Evensong (i.e., sung Evening Prayer) is one of the few services in Church of England cathedrals that regularly is attended by unchurched people. And when they come, they will hear the Scriptures proclaimed, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

6. It can be lay-led.

Other than the absolution, nothing in Morning Prayer specifically requires a priest, and the rubrics make provision for alternates to the absolution when there is no priest. Deacons and lay leaders can (and should) lead Matins. This can be very helpful in Church Plants that are led by Catechists. This can also be helpful for situations in which a supply priest cannot be found to cover a sick or traveling rector. One of our goals at All Saints for 2019 is to incorporate Morning or Evening Prayer into all the lay-led midweek Bible studies and meetings. We believe this will strengthen the laity, encourage the clergy, and keep us rooted in our Anglican ideals.

If you are unfamiliar with Morning Prayer, the easiest way to rectify the situation is simply to pick up your Prayer Book and read through the Morning Prayer, including the rubrics. I generally recommend the classical editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (e.g., the English 1662, American 1928, and Canadian 1962), as the Offices are in a simpler format than in most modern Prayer Books, even though the language is Elizabethan. Additionally, they tend to be at the front of the book, making them easier to locate. If you have any questions about praying or singing the Offices, please email me at fatherisaac@allsaintsanglican.net. As your canon for liturgy, I'd be more than happy to help!



Please Send Submissions for the *Diocesan Digest* to
fatherisaac@allsaintsanglican.net.

We encourage news, photos, and articles from your
congregations and communities!