

# - A GRAIN OF MUSTARDSEED -

Dear Friends in Christ:

Summer 2023

Summer is a season of growth. Trinity season, which contains it, is also a season of growth: One whose fruit and increase is meant to be love. On the First Sunday after Trinity St. John teaches us that “God is love and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in Him.” Lazarus and Dives are shown us as the contrasting example of how to love (understanding our need for God’s love) and how not to love (ignorant of our need for anything but ourselves). Self-consumption is part of our fallen condition, it always has been, yet we live in a world that seems increasingly determined to encourage that vice and name it a virtue. Narcissism is readily apparent in the world of Facebook ‘selfies,’ shallow consumerism and rude drivers. It also lies at the heart of the steam-rolling activism of gender and sexual identity politics (‘who are YOU to tell ME what gender/sexual identity/marriage is?’). In all these our God-given natures as male and female and the very act of marriage itself are divorced from their rational purposes on the altar of ‘self-fulfillment’. And yet the Christian life is about our dying to self, indeed marriage (like all states of life for a Christian) is just one more opportunity to *die to self*, not get what you want. How joyful a thing it is then to anticipate, at the end of August, the Holy Matrimony of our friends Minu and Trevor. Keep them in your prayers as they continue to prepare for marriage, the school of sainthood. Indeed all the saints of the Church (many of whose feasts we keep this summer...see below) would tell us that our lives are only lived properly when they are lived to God’s glory and the good of those to whom we offer our sacrificial love: “They loved not their lives unto the death” the angel tells St. John in *Revelation*. We must remember that. Confusion as to the relation of current equality struggles with those of the past, struggles of racial, ethnic, class and sexual equality, needs to be clarified. Accusations of hate and narrow-mindedness toward people of faith need to be met with love and reasoned apologetic, not trite catch-phrases. And of course what is needed on the part of all Christians is the pursuit of personal holiness in our own lives: the current debates surrounding sexual ethics would never have entered the fore without our first having eroded the institutions of marriage, without our turning a blind eye to fornication, without our indifference to family life and the unborn. And our failures in this realm as in any are a result of our ‘forsaking the Word of God’ (the prophets told us centuries ago about the cause and effect relationship of the two), our lack of love and worship for the God who demands ourselves, our souls and bodies, and our unwillingness to love as God loves. Trinitytide presents us with countless lessons of love and countless examples of loving as Christ loves. Let’s learn to become what we see in Him.

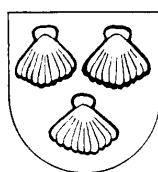
Yours in Christ, Edward L. Rix

## SUMMER FEASTS

I suppose the term conjures-up visions of barbeques and cold ale, but for the Church the months of July and August contain significant opportunities to feast on the things of God. Firstly there’s Independence Day, kept with a celebration of Holy Communion on Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. but also ‘observed’ on the Sunday before (the 2<sup>nd</sup>). The Prayer Book commends the religious observation of Independence Day, which makes perfect sense: we must be thankful for our blessings and liberty in this land and pray (in this straightened age) for the preservation of the same.



St. James’ Day is Tuesday, July 25<sup>th</sup> and is kept with Communion at 10:00 a.m. Often called “The Greater” to distinguish him both from St. James the Less (whose feast is kept with St. Philip on May 1<sup>st</sup>) and St. James the Brother of the Lord, this is that James who was brother to John the Beloved Disciple and son of Zebedee and grew up fishing with both of them on the Sea of Galilee until called to discipleship by Jesus. James was the first of the twelve Apostles to be martyred for Christ’s sake, his death at the hands of Herod Agrippa being recorded in twelfth chapter of *The Acts of the Apostles*. The transfer of his bodily remains to the Spanish city of Compostela has occasioned pilgrimages to the cathedral of that city since the Middle Ages, making James the patron of pilgrims and giving James the familiar symbol of three scallop shells, pilgrims taking a shell from those left by local fishermen as proof of their having made the pilgrimage.



The Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6<sup>th</sup>, falls on a Sunday this year. Often ignored (most will not even celebrate it, though it falls on a Sunday), the Transfiguration celebrates an important moment in salvation history (the testimony of the Law and the Prophets to the person of the Messiah) and as such ought to be observed with reverence. We have the added pleasure of having Confirmation that day (see below).



Finally the feast of St. Bartholomew is on Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup> and is also kept with a 10:00 a.m. service of Holy Communion. Bartholomew feast is significant both as a celebration of the one we call the ‘Anonymous Apostle’ (not much is known of him beyond a few mentions in the Gospel) and because it was on his feast in 1572 that tens of thousands of Huguenots (French Calvinist Christians) were massacred for their commitment to Reformation principles. As such it is a day to pray for peace and tolerance amongst Christians of different conviction and an end to religious and sectarian strife in our world.



## CONFIRMATION – SUNDAY, AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup>

After a break of five years (largely due to the COVID pandemic) we will have the Apostolic rite of the Laying on of Hands (Confirmation) administered by our friend, Bishop Jackton Lugumira, retired Bishop of Lweru, Tanzania, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Transfiguration. Pray for Benjamin, Minu, Jane, Lars, Libby and Timothy who prepare for that sacramental rite and their profession of faith on that day. Pray also for James who, as he cannot be with us that day, will be confirmed by Bishop Lugumira on August 14<sup>th</sup>. And as Bishop and Mrs. Lugumira will be with us for several days, do let me know if you would like to meet them or entertain them while they are here. They are old friends of the parish, having attended St. John’s, Huntingdon Valley in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s when the Bishop was pursuing graduate studies at Westminster Seminary. Fr. Rix has visited the Bishop’s former Diocese in 2009 and we continue to support the work of the Church there under the leadership of his successor, Bishop Mbelwa. The Lugumiras were last with us when he administered Confirmation in 2016.

## SUMMER STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP

And on the topic of fellowship, our 7:00 a.m. Tuesday morning study group continues, with a few breaks, throughout the summer. The group is part-way through a study of *The Book of Judges*. The Thursday Bible study is on break until after Labor Day as is Sunday Adult Forum and Sunday School. All of those will resume after Labor Day.

## ‘SAFE’ CHURCHES FOR VACATION

Every summer parishioners ask me where they might attend a faithful Anglican congregation while on vacation. This is no easy task (even for your pastor!) and often the answer is, there simply isn’t one in that region wherein you are intending to vacation. The best guide I know of is the *Directory of Traditional Anglican and Episcopal parishes*. We have an older copy of this useful book in the parish office and you are free to consult it, but as it has not been updated in several years and the on-line version of the same is currently undergoing a long-term rebuild, I would recommend your speaking to the parish clergy: I will do my best to help you find a good, Anglican option. However, when there isn’t an orthodox parish where you are travelling, by all means ***do not stay away from church altogether!*** Find a Bible-believing, Reformed Church or attend an Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic Church (wherein it is proper to respect their discipline and not receive the Sacrament) and receive our Lord in the Word written as it is declared and preached.



“The kingdom of God...is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” *St. Luke 13:18-19*