

Weekly Musing † May 9, 2011



*Where shall I cast this body? What will greet
My sorrows with an end? What gentle ground
And hospitable grave will wrap me round?
Who last my dying eyelids stoop to close—
Some saint, the Saviour's friend? or one of those
Who do not know Him? The air interpose,
And scatter these words too.*

As it happens today is the feast day of the only saint on this week's calendar – Gregory of Nazianzus (330 – 390), whose poem is above. If you know much about poetry you could easily have assigned this poem with its brooding nature to the 20th century, written perhaps by someone like R. S. Thomas, The Welsh poet and priest who was nominated for the Noble Prize in Literature.

Gregory was born around 330 and was the son of a bishop. His life is typical of many of this early period and completely atypical of the present. He was ordained a priest against his will and then a bishop. He did not want to be active in church affairs but yearned for the monastic life and scholarship. During the council of Constantinople in 381, he was made bishop of Constantinople, a prestigious position that would later be a patriarchate (seat of a patriarch).

He was an influential writer and his influence and eloquence helped institute the Nicene faith, as we call it. This is to say that he helped make the church one that conformed with the Nicene Creed. Though the Nicene Creed was started at the council of Nicea in 325, its final form came together shortly after the Council of Constantinople.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

You may wonder why such a smallish bit of wording is so important. Ours is a fairly ancient religion and our branch of it is 'conservative' I hate to use that word inasmuch as it seems inexorably related to politics but it has an older and larger meaning. We believe in the tenants of an old faith whose very vitality is attested to by its reference to an ancient creed which has stood for 1800 years. Unlike many modern American churches, we are not allowed to be anything we want or change with the times in order to attract people. We insist on a religion which for centuries has had the power to heal, change and forgive the people of God. Those things are not automatically the same things which attract people. The latter can be flashy and ephemeral.

Is good theology important? Yes. Bad theology rarely leads to anything except bad practice (praxis). Good theology leads us ever again into the infinite mystery and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer.

News from St. Luke's

This coming weekend will feature our UTO ingathering. The United Thank Offering has been a major charitable arm of the Episcopal Church for a long time. They have their national triennial meeting every three years. The United Thank Offering provided \$55,000 for a drain field at Camp Marshall. This is not the only grant we have received.



Sail boat at Camp Marshall donated by an old friend of the Rector.



We are also honoring our graduating seniors at St. Luke's this Sunday: Samantha, Devin, Hilary, Jessica, Christian and Alexander. The reception after the service will be in their honor.

Thanks to Kay Johnson, Phyllis Johnson, and Jean Bradford who helped host a lunch for the Billings Ministerial Association. I did a presentation on "St. Francis and the Sultan" and then we talked about a prayer service we are doing on June 19th to rededicate the METRA.

Our Tuesday Bible studies continue apace. We meet Tuesday evenings from 6 pm. to 7:30 pm. The Youth Group meets Wednesday from 6 pm to 8 pm

Get your applications in to Camp Marshall, places are filling up faster than in years past. We already have half a dozen young people from St. Luke's going. We will have diocesan Day Camp (along with St. Stephen's) from July 18 -- 22. This is for kids from grades 2 -- 6 and lasts from 8 am to 5 pm each of the five days. We will also use local volunteers.

Don't forget that starting in June, we will have only one service on Sunday at 10 am Yes, we will still have the 5 pm service on Saturday lest there be wailing, gnashing of teeth and rending of garments. The Wednesday noon Eucharist, youth group, and Bible study do not meet in the summer.

One more picture of the acolytes from the Bishop's visit. They are as diverse as the group that the Holy Spirit fell upon on the day of Pe.

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