

# MY DEAR THEOPHILUS

VOLUME 4 / ISSUE 6 (JUNE 2020)

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Anglican Communion on June 29 officially welcomed the Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria as its 41st independent province.

National Cathedral of Sts. Peter & Paul Cuts 15% of Staff in Pandemic



Dear Parish Family:

Once again we are in what in the Church is known as “Ordinary Time.”

What is “Ordinary Time”? It is that part of the Christian liturgical year outside of Advent, Christmastide, Lent, the Easter Triduum, and Eastertide, and is divided into two periods: that between Christmastide and Lent, and that between Eastertide and Advent. In this season the Church celebrates the public ministry of Jesus from his Baptism to the time of his final suffering and death.

Well, this year, Ordinary Time seems to be anything but ordinary. We are still in a time the pandemic. Things are not back to normal in our daily lives. There seems to be a great deal of uncertainty, and at times the information appears to be conflicting.

Yet in the midst of this, although this may be new to us, we must remember that in reality this is nothing new to humanity. As the Old Testament writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us: “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the

sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new'? It has been already in the ages before us." Eccles. 1:9-10.

I have heard some people ask: "Where is God in this pandemic?" Well, my answer is, where God has always been. God is with His people. God is there in good times and in bad, in periods of certainty and in periods of doubt. God is there when we are well and when we are ill. God is there in life and in death.

We are a people of faith, a people who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ through his life, death and resurrection, just as God planned from the creation of the world knowing what humanity would do. There is nothing that can change that, although at times it may seem as if it has.

N.T. Wright recently wrote in an article for *Time* magazine which was adopted from his book *God and the Pandemic*:

For the last 300 years the western world has largely regarded "religion" (the very word has changed its meaning to accommodate this new viewpoint) as a private matter: "what someone does with their solitude." The Christian faith as a whole has been reduced, in the public mind, to a "private" movement in the sense that – so many say – it should have no place in public life. Thus I can still go shopping in the crowded little off-licence (in America, the liquor store) on the corner; but I cannot go and sit in the ancient, prayer-soaked chapel across the street. Worship becomes invisible. ...

Interestingly, the signs so far are that many people have "been to church" in that virtual reality who would not have come to a church building. But our churches have been for centuries physical and often audible reminders, on main streets and in town squares, on city blocks and in suburban developments, of the vital dimension to life that Western modernity has tried to crowd out. We will no doubt learn many things in this time of

enforced “exile” – which is what it is. But we should be praying towards the day when our buildings will function within our society as they were designed to do. ...

I totally understand that we need to be responsible and scrupulously careful. I am appalled by reports of would-be devout but misguided people ignoring safety regulations because they believe that as Christians they are automatically protected against disease, or that (as I heard someone say on television) “you’ll be safe inside church because the devil can’t get in there.” (I wanted to say: Trust me, lady, I’m a bishop: the devil knows his way in there as well as anybody else.) ...

[W]e do well to hold one another in charitable prayer.

Part of the answer to that prayer, as many have seen, might be to recognize the present moment as a time of exile. We find ourselves “by the waters of Babylon,” thoroughly confused and grieving for the loss of our normal life. “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?,” as in Psalm 137, translates quite easily into “How can I know the joy of the Eucharist sitting in front of a computer?” Or “How can I celebrate Ascension or Pentecost without being with my brothers and sisters?”

Of course, part of the point of Psalm 137 is precisely that this Psalm is itself a “song of the Lord.” That is the irony: writing a poem about being unable to write a poem. Part of the discipline of lament might then be to turn the lament itself into a song of sorrow. Perhaps that is part of the way in which we are being called right now to be people of lament – lamenting even the fact that we can’t lament in the way we would normally prefer. We need to explore those questions, and the new disciplines they may demand, in whatever ways we can. Perhaps this, too, is simply to be accepted as part of what life in Babylon is like. We must, as Jeremiah said, settle down into this regime and “seek

the welfare of the city” where we are. But let’s not pretend it’s where we want to be. Let’s not forget Jerusalem. Let’s not decide to stay here.

Sometime to think about during “Ordinary Time.”

Your servant in Christ,

The Rev. Chester J. Makowski, Rector

## THE COOKING MINISTRY



The Cooking Ministry will be off the entire month of July and back in August.



*FEATURED HOLY PERSON OF  
THE MONTH  
ALBAN  
June 22  
By James Kiefer*

There were probably Christians in the British Isles already in the first century. However, Alban is the first recorded Christian martyr. The

traditional date of his death is 304, during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian; but many scholars now date it as around 209, during the persecution under the Emperor Septimius Severus. Alban was a pagan, and a soldier in the Roman Army. He gave shelter to a Christian priest who was fleeing from arrest, and in the next few days the two talked at length, and Alban became a Christian. When officers came in search of the priest, Alban met them, dressed in the priest's cloak, and they mistook him for the priest and arrested him. He refused to renounce his new faith, and was beheaded. He thus became the first Christian martyr in Britain. The second was the executioner who was to kill him, but who heard his testimony and was so impressed that he became a Christian on the spot, and refused to kill Alban. The third was the priest, who when he learned that Alban had been arrested in his place, hurried to the court in the hope of saving Alban by turning himself in. The place of their deaths is near the site of St. Alban's Cathedral today.

Let us pray: Almighty God, by whose grace and power your holy martyr Alban triumphed over suffering and was faithful even unto death: Grant to us, who now remember him with thanksgiving, to be so faithful in our witness to you in this world, that we may receive with him the crown of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## From *The Living Church*

### Soup, Service, and God's Love in Honduras

June 23, 2020

By Ignacio Gama and Kristen Gunn

In a lock down that has kept Hondurans at home since March, the clergy and pastoral leaders of the Episcopal Church of Honduras are finding new and creative ways to

reach people with *las buenas nuevas*, the good news of God's saving love in Christ Jesus, which necessitates the care of bodies as well as souls.

In some ways it has never been so difficult to practice incarnational, embodied religion. But in Honduras, where, according to World Bank statistics, just under half the population lives in poverty and many do not have internet access in their homes, the present crisis has created singular ministry challenges.

The Episcopal Church of Honduras, which serves people in all sectors of Honduran society, is nevertheless doing everything it can to face these challenges with faith and hope. In a sense this pandemic is revealing what is best and unique about this particular diocese of Province IX.

“Once the lockdown is over we will have a huge amount of work to do,” The Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, Bishop of Honduras, wrote to us some weeks ago via email. “We are holding Bible studies online, celebrating the Eucharist online — it is sort of awkward-feeling. ... However, I'm already planning and have organized the clergy to be ready to begin food drives. There are a lot of people dying from the lack of food and proper healthcare.”

In the weeks since he wrote us, at least one such feeding operation has already sprung up on the island of Roatán off Honduras's northern coast. The Revs. Nelson and Kara Mejía, a married pair of priests serving on the island, have worked together with one of their congregations to start a safe, socially-distanced soup kitchen that offers meals for pickup by the most vulnerable in their neighborhood. When we spoke with them via Zoom, the soup operation had just fed over a hundred people and they were hoping to raise enough money to grow it by 30 percent the next week. “We need to be able to keep doing this,” Reverenda Kara told us, adding that a donation link would be made available via the website for [Teach Them to Fish Micro-Industries](#), a partnership between their church in Roatán and Trinity Episcopal Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

The spirit of collaboration, solidarity and enthusiasm for the work of the Church has been growing nearer the center of the Honduran outbreak in San Pedro Sula as well, inspiring clergy such as the Rev. José Batiz to obtain safe-conduct permits to periodically check in on his parishioners, and to celebrate the Eucharist outdoors. “Father, when, when? When can we meet?” the people of his church, *San Lucas Evangelista*, have been asking. “We're a young church, but one with great spirit,” Batiz said of the diocese in general, adding that these times had made more evident the great worth of “small, tightly-knit congregations, like those of the early Christians, where each member is valued and embraced.”

Even as the diocese's many churches and its several bilingual schools have been forced to offer their ministries online, the turn to virtual means of communication and connection has brought hidden blessings. For some the experience of church has become more intimate and family-oriented, as relatives and friends gather privately to follow pre-recorded services via messaging platforms. The Rev. Jackie Ruíz of San Pedro Sula told us that the new format had helped her to rediscover the joy of praying the offices purely "for enjoyment" with her family. "We do it because we long to be in the presence of God," she said. Another priest in Tegucigalpa, the Rev. Gerardo Alonzo, shared that more people than ever had been watching Morning and Evening Prayer on WhatsApp, thanks to his parishioners' forwarding the services to others. "It's not a normal time, but it's God's time," he told us.

The Rev. Connie Sánchez, who oversees a diocesan NGO empowering rural women, said that smartphone technology had enabled the organization to keep offering instruction on finance and business planning, but that hunger was becoming a serious challenge for the women she serves, many of whom are single mothers fighting to keep families alive. Though the lockdown has prevented her from leaving Tegucigalpa to physically assist the hungry in rural areas, she has been able to refer callers to other clergy and churches nearer to them. "There is nothing more painful than to hear the words, 'Reverend, I am hungry,' but knowing that God is with us, we can face this epidemic," Sanchez said.

While much remains uncertain, the Honduran church looks positively towards the future, perhaps precisely because it has for many years wrestled with adversity on many fronts. The clergy have a vast array of responsibilities, especially in education and development. Though they may be more hard-pressed than ever, we consistently heard from them a message of hope. In the last decade, the diocese has been working hard to achieve financial self-sufficiency. Despite the present economic setbacks, it is remarkable that so many members of the clergy demonstrate a deep faith that God will provide, and that lay people are ready to take a more decisive role in a movement less concerned with the future of the Church, and more with being "the Church of the future."

*Ignacio Gama and Kristen Gunn are students at Nashotah House Theological Seminary.*



***PLEASE LET US KNOW IF SOMEONE NEEDS A HOME VISIT***

If you know of anyone who needs a home visit because they cannot get to Church, please call the Parish Office, or let Fr. Makowski know. Either Fr. Makowski or one of our Lay Eucharistic Visitors will call on them. If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Fr. Makowski at 713.299.7675.

***THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER***

Praying is something that we all can do, young and old, rich and poor, tall and short. Please pray for everyone on our Prayer List.



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***ONCE WE ALL GET TOGETHER AGAIN, PLEASE  
BRING PORK & BEANS FOR MANNAFEST!***



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