

The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter

The Right Reverend D. M. Ashman

February 2025

The Seminary Classes

Spring Semester classes have begun, including the second half of Archbishop's Schultz's Survey of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Bishop Ashman will continue his Friday Latin and Greek classes along with a class in World History and Religion from Egypt to the conclusion of the Byzantine (East Roman Empire) on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. Pacific Time and a new seminar focusing on *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis on Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time. All course offerings are either credit or audit and it's not too late to at least audit. Call Bishop Ashman at 818-749-8139 if you are interested.

The "Suffering" Suffragan

Like many deacons and small parish clergy, Suffragan Bishops aren't always in the headlines. We talk so much about the value of those small church priests and deacons – the good they do – the souls they shepherd – the lives they change! Well, Our Western State's Suffragan Bishop is a genuine hero. He not only shepherds Saint Luke's parish in Redding and adds his wisdom to the Council of Bishops, but this Bishop is also an arson investigator – yes! He has a "day job" like so many of our dedicated clergy. He is at the right of the picture below on the job in the middle of the Southern California fires.



ACW-DWS Notes, February 2025

Thank you to all the churches that have sent in their annual ACW dues, and a gentle reminder to those that have not that we do need the paperwork and the checks as soon as possible so that the Provincial ACW Yearbook can be printed before the Synods. I know that some ACW Groups do not have their annual meetings until February, but please send the form and check in as soon as you have the details to Gillian Golden, ACW-DWS President, P.O. Box 558, Selma, OR 97538-0558.

Please also remember to order your Lenten Mite Boxes in time for Ash Wednesday, March 5th. Order forms have gone out to all the churches, or you can email me gillian.golden@yahoo.com let me know how many boxes you want, and where to send them, and I will get them in the mail. Last year, we raised \$3,133.52, which goes to Student Support at St. Joseph of Arimathea Seminary. Do not forget that the next recipient may be someone from your parish! Let us aim for over \$4000 this year!

The New Oxford & Morse House Refurbishing Fund is growing well and currently stands at almost \$14,000! Look for the various fundraisers for this project and contribute where you can either as an individual or with your church.

The 2025 Synod of the Diocese of Western States will be held from May 6th to May 10th at Embassy Suites Hotel, 1345 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA. The ACW lunch and conference will be held on Thursday, May 8th, and those of you who live in the San Francisco Bay area but are unable to attend the whole Synod are urged to try attend our lunch and conference. It is such a good opportunity to meet members from other churches, and to exchange ideas. We will be having our annual Drawings to raise money for Bishop Morse Youth Camp, so please send pictures and descriptions of your items to me (gillian.golden@yahoo.com) no later than April 6th so we have time to make the brochure and get it and tickets out to the churches before Easter. Any small items you might have for the Welcome Bags can be sent to Donna Holloway, 1424 Lear Way, Redding, CA 96001. St. Luke's Redding ACW have very kindly agreed to assemble the bags.

Gillian Golden, President ACW-DWS

Something to Think and Pray About

It is critical my dear brothers and sisters that you understand you are giving to God in your tithes and offerings out of obedience to His instructions, in faith, and in love for Him. How many people in churches do not understand this very basic principle. They curtail or fail to give because they don't like the priest or pastor and what he says; or they don't like many of the people in the church for a myriad of reasons; or they don't like the political stance of the church (hopefully not a factor but I have witnessed it.) or they don't believe that God's instructions about tithing apply to this present age. Let me say it again, you are giving to God first and last. And have fulfilled His commandment when you give the tithe. It is between the two of you.

If the pastor is preaching heresy, get out and find a church that preaches the truth according to the Scripture. If the topic of sermons and homilies is geared only to a political viewpoint; leave and find a church that preaches, teaches, and functions according to the Gospels, and take your money with you and give it there. The church where you give becomes the steward of the tithe and is now accountable to God for it. The giver has fulfilled his or her obligation.

A Sermon for the Feast of the Purification

Which falls on the fortieth day after Christmas

In an old 1950s black and white film about Christmas, *A Star Shall Rise*, began with this dedication: *Some men find truth through science and learning; some through simple faith; [but] none without humility.* The Feast of the Purification is not only the last day of the Christmas Season but it most assuredly focuses on the virtue of humility: Saint Mary (*a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*), Saint Simeon (*just and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel*), Saint Anna (*and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*) and each of us as well (*that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts*).

Fascinating is the Lesson for the Epistle from Malachi the Prophet. Malachi (whose actual name is not known) means *my messenger*. Malachi warned the Jews that even the rebuilt Temple of Solomon and the daily rituals of the priests had not brought a revived renewal of religious fervor much less respect for their religious ceremonies and obligations. Malachi prophesied that the Day of the Coming of the Lord was imminent when his justice would be established once again, the Temple and its ceremonies would be purified finally to make the offerings offered therein sweet and pleasant to the Lord. So, Malachi's prophecy was put into the Prayer Book to make it crystal clear that the parallel between Malachi's prediction of the coming of God's justice and judgement that would come with the presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple. The two cannot be separated.

The Gospel describes the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy in wonderful detail which is a combining of Mary's ritual purification (according to the Law of Moses) and the redemption of a woman's first-born son (a pair of turtle doves or two small pigeons). The aged priest Simeon had patiently awaited this moment, as it had been revealed to him that he would not see death until he had seen the consolation of Israel; that is, the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy. The Church has enshrined this moment as it uses for the second canticle for Evening Prayer his exultation: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Thus, the Song of Simeon is not only the perfect culmination for Christmas (the birth of the Saviour) but also the transition to the Epiphany season and the beginning of Christ's ministry to Jews and Gentiles alike. Moreover, Simeon and Anna are icons for us; they were humble and patient Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, as we must be humble and patient that we may be presented unto God with pure and clean hearts. Although many churchmen prefer to emphasize the Purification of Mary, today is more accurately a feast of Our Lord. The Prayer Book Revisers understood this when, in 1662, they put used the Presentation of Christ in the Temple as the preferred title for this feast.

The Purification is not as ancient as the first three major Christian feast days: Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost. Like Christmas, it comes later and first appears in Christian tradition in the fourth century after the Church had won its liberty and began to dominate the Roman Empire. One ancient name was the Meeting of our Lord and Simeon, still used in Orthodox churches. In the fifth century, the Emperor Justinian officially introduced the feast in Constantinople; and pope Sergius, a century and a half later in Rome, began the tradition of a procession with lighted candles. The blessing of candles which symbolizes the light of Christ cutting through the darkness of sin and death, and the name Candlemas date back to the eleventh century. But it must never be forgotten that all this symbolism and ceremonial is no substitution for humility and the Faith. So, may all who read this homily have a blessed Candlemas on this feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, as we grow in grace and humility through the Light of Christ.

Diocese of the Western States

34th Synod and ACW Conference Schedule

Revised

**BLACK DIAMOND ROOM (HOSPITALITY) OPEN
DAILY AT 7:00A.M., TUESDAY, MAY 6TH
THROUGH FRIDAY, MAY 9TH TO PICK UP
FOLDERS.**

Tuesday, May 6th, 2025

St. Joseph of Arimathea Retreat

12 noon Low Mass
1:00p.m. Hosted light lunch
2:00 p.m. Meditation and Readings
4:30 p.m. Solemn Evensong

Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

Alameda Room

8:00 a.m. Mass
10:30 a.m. Bishops' Round Table

Mount Diablo Boardroom

10:00 a.m. Standing Committee
12 noon Hosted Lunch for Standing
and Board of Directors
1:15 p.m. Board of Directors

Atrium

3:00 p.m. Synod Opening Reception
(Hosted by the Anglican Church Women)
Refreshments: Hors d'oeuvres. wine, lemonade,
coffee, tea.

5:00 p.m. BISHOP'S AUCTION

Benefits the Clergy! Join in! Bid, mingle, mix, chat
and have fun!

7:00 p.m. No Host Dinner

Thursday, May 8th, 2025

Alameda Room

8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer and Mass
10:30 a.m. Workshop: Fr. Canda
Bishops' Camp: Who? – Where? –
Why? – How?

Atrium

11:30 a.m. ACW and Clergy Lunch
1:00 p.m. ACW Conference

Alameda Room

1:30 p.m. Clericus
3:30 p.m. Evening Prayer

Evening

5:00 p.m. Clergy and Wives Dinner at Il Fornaio,
1430 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596.
Laity : on your own, or sign up to join those
eating at Embassy Suites Restaurant

Friday, May 9th, 2025

Alameda Room

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
9:30 a.m. Synod Delegate Registration
10:00a.m. Synod Business Meeting
Lunch on your own

St. Martin of Tours: Pontifical Mass

Plenty of **free** parking. Help with carpools!
1:30 p.m. Rehearsal
2:30 p.m. Pontifical Mass.

Contra Costa Ballroom

6:00 p.m. Social Hour (No Host Bar)
7:00 p.m. Synod Banquet.
Followed by ACW Fundraiser Drawings

Saturday, May 10th, 2025

Alameda Room

9:00 a.m. Mass –
Breakfast on your own. Last chance to catch up!