



Anglican Catholic Church



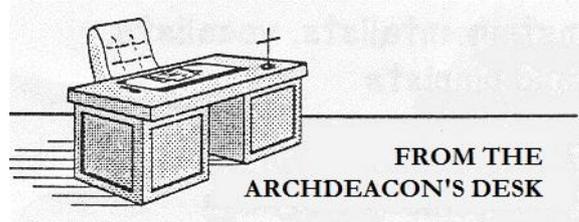
Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

January 2016

My dear friends and colleagues,

With the earliness of Easter comes, of course, an early Lent. Now this usually fails to excite folk in the same way that Christmas or Easter do, and it seems we are scarcely out of the festive season before we are plunged into the “Gessima” Sundays which propel us reluctantly towards six weeks of doom and gloom and chocolate withdrawal symptoms. Yet Lent can be a very beautiful time, and not only because by the time we reach its conclusion the days are considerably longer than when we began it (Lent = Lencten = Lengthen).



One can find a good many positive ways in which to regard Lent and thereby make it a very valuable period in the annual cycle. For example, we are all familiar with the concept of stocktaking. Lent is the season which the Church, in her wisdom, has set aside for us to “take stock”. To pause each year on our way (and in our ways) to see how our spiritual “business” is going: what we are spending and how we are saving; what is the profit and what is the loss as we proceed on our Christian progress. If Lent, therefore, can be regarded as a progress or journey let us consider how we might navigate it. No ship sets out to sea without charts and a compass; just as no business can prosper without proper book-keeping. Much time is spent on charts and accounts, so it stands to reason that a person’s soul is worth equal care. Our Lord asks: “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Lent is the time to consider these things. Lent is the time when God calls us to think, and to ask ourselves whether we have wandered from, or loitered on, the road to heaven (or even lost our way entirely).

Perhaps, also, there is no better time than Lent to re-consider the nature of corporate worship. We gather to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, together, with one voice, in the sight of the angels, and in communion with all of the saints. We break the bread of Life and drink the cup of Salvation, His priest joining Heaven and Earth in the unfathomable mystery, receiving the same Lord under the form of bread and wine, and uniting with our brothers and sisters in fellowship and joint prayers for ourselves and for others. We hear the words of Scripture, ancient prayers and prophecies and teaching and poetry, and we hear God’s word for us proclaimed by His sacred ministers. We cloak our worship with the mysteries of the ages, worshipping in some form as Christians have done for two millennia, opening our minds and forgetting our individual lives to contemplate more fully that which is incomprehensible. Sometimes it is necessary to repeat these basic principles of our purpose in gathering for worship, and to reassess the value and benefits of worshipping together. We cannot underestimate the importance of communal worship as a means of uniting His Body on earth, that is the Church, and of uniting us on earth with the Communion of Saints who have gone before us.

So there are a few ideas. Lent is not all about waiting for it to be over, but is an opportunity for spiritual enrichment and even joy.

May we all experience a deeply spiritual Lent together.

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I ASKED

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve –
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do great things –
I was given illness that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy –
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have people's praise –
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life –
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayer was answered;
I am among all people most richly blessed.

— *An Anonymous Confederate Soldier of the American Civil War*

I mentioned before that I would write about the protocol which pertains to the Diocesan Bishop when he visits, and upon greeting him.

So how should one greet a Bishop? The correct traditional custom upon coming into his presence is to genuflect upon the left knee and to kiss the episcopal ring on his right hand. Some bishops are not comfortable with this, but be assured that in the Anglican Catholic Church this is the correct (and expected) procedure. It may be that you have a physical difficulty in dropping to the left knee, or indeed any knee, and in this case a bow is acceptable. One would possibly prefer to make a bow if meeting the bishop in the street in any case. (I'm sure he would understand, especially if the pavement were wet!) Initially he should be addressed as "My Lord", and thereafter will be happy with "Bishop" or "Father". Archbishops, of course, are entitled to be called "Your Grace". Those of you with long memories or back numbers will recall that the Bishop circulated in ACC-UK after his Consecration his preferences and established the norm for the diocese. Those not blessed with either facility can refer to the article here <http://www.anglican catholic.org.uk/uploads/docs/acc-duk-advent-2008.pdf>, (pp 16 & 17). (Back issues to 2008 can be found on the Diocesan website.)

When the Bishop arrives to enter your church at the beginning of a service, providing it is practicable to do so (and this is not always possible), there may be a short but moving ceremony which demonstrates the respect that both the people and the Bishop have for each other, and the humility which comes with the episcopal responsibility. A small carpet is laid at the door with a priedieu (prayer desk) and a cushion (green if possible) upon it. A crucifix is placed on a suitable salver. A small table should be prepared, with the incense boat and the holy water vessel (aspersorium) and sprinkler (aspergillum). The Bishop is met at the door by the parish clergy and servers and he kneels for a few moments of prayer, following which he kisses the crucifix and stands. He lustrates (sprinkles) himself, the parish clergy and the congregation from the door, blesses incense and is censured by the parish priest (with the usual three double swings). The procession then enters the church.

Another custom practised in this and many other dioceses is that of providing a seventh candlestick at Mass, symbolising jurisdiction and the fact that the successor of the apostles is presiding. It is usually convenient to place this beside the altar crucifix on the left hand side, if not behind it, and is only used when the Bishop Ordinary or the Archbishop of the Province celebrate. The Bishop will sometimes bring his hand-held candle in a saucer-like candlestick with a longish handle on one side (a bugia). This is held or placed near the missal or other book whenever the Bishop reads or sings anything from it.

Formality of this sort is more often than not overlooked or ignored, which is rather a pity because the symbolism behind such actions are associated with the institution of the apostolic succession itself and not the person of the temporal custodian of the office. When tradition is lost it is usually impossible to reinstate it.

As always, I welcome any questions and will do my best to provide an explanation.