

**OCTAVE OF ANNUNCIATION OF THE BVM
SOLEMN EVENSONG AND CONFIRMATION
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
BISHOP WILLIAM MCCLEAN
PSALM 77:13**

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“THY WAY, O GOD, IS IN THE SANCTUARY.”

I trust you noticed that this verse is different from the one we recited from the Prayer Book. I used the King James Version rather than Coverdale one in the Prayer Book – and you’ll see why in a moment.

I think the Psalmist had evidently gone through some great time of affliction and sorrow. He seems to have been sinking into despondency – when referring to God’s dealings in the old day. Whenever he began reflecting on God’s works and doings – then he was more cheerful and he seemed more comforted. Don’t we often feel the same way when we read the Psalms? Then the Psalmist exclaims: “Thy way, of God, is in the sanctuary.”

I’d like to try to establish this declaration that God’s way is in the sanctuary.

We know from our scriptural studies that the sanctuary was that part of the tabernacle and temple where the priests officiated. It was very similar to our priests celebrating the Mass in the sanctuary today. However, we should remember that in modern usage – many refer to the whole church as the sanctuary. It is here – in His House - that His Holy Name is recorded – and where His people meet together as a parish family for worship. The WAY of God signifies the manifestations of God – the revelation of His mind – His dealings with His people.

We will notice then that God’s way of instruction is in the sanctuary. So – to ease confusion - for the remainder of this address I shall use the word CHURCH instead of sanctuary.

Don’t you think that all of nature is intended to teach us something of God’s power – wisdom – and goodness? I do. However – it is in His house where we are taught those things concerning God – which we do not receive from nature. It is in the Church where we are more fully instructed in

the Faith. It is in the Church where we are more spiritually – and more clearly – taught; especially on those subjects related to the work of God – and the doctrines of God and the doctrines of the Church which affect the growth and well-being of our immortal souls. I don’t think I have to tell you that life and immortality are only brought to light in the Gospels.

God’s way of conviction is in His temple - His sanctuary – His Church. “The Lord is in His Holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.” So reads the first of the opening sentences in both of the Daily Offices. It is in the Church that we learn the truth about the enemies of Christ. Yes – it is in the Church that souls are nourished and led to see and feel their sinfulness. “We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.”

God’s way of salvation is in the Church – the Body of Christ. It is here then – where we stand up to declare all the words of eternal life and salvation in our God. It is in the Church where the Word of God’s salvation is read and expounded. It is in the Church where thirsty souls are enabled to drink of the waters of salvation. Yes – it is in the Church where the Banquet of the Eucharist is celebrated and the redeeming love of God is spread open. Souls who are in a perishing world are invited to eat the Bread of Heaven and drink the cup of salvation. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (St. John 6:51)

God’s way of comfort is in His Church. He said to the watchmen of Zion, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God. Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,” The portion of scripture appointed for the Feast of St. John Baptist. (BCP pg. 242 – from Isaiah 40:1-2a)

“Nevertheless, my feet were almost gone, my treadings had well-nigh slipt. (Psalm 73: 2) King David’s feet had slipped until – until - he went into the house of the Lord. It was

there – you see – that he received direction and comfort. God pours into His people the oil of joy, consolation and gladness.

God's way of sanctification is in His Church. Here the members of His Body grow in grace and "come unto the knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) It is here that our holy Faith is deepened and our conformity to Christ is increased. The Church then – is the pillar and ground of truth – and Almighty God sanctifies His people through His truth. His Word is truth. (St. John 17:17b)

So why does God have His way in the Church?

Well - here you see – God reveals Himself more plainly to His people. Here He gives Himself! He has His way in Church. It is here where He is blessed, praised and adored. "Blessed, praised and adored be Jesus Christ on His throne of glory in heaven, in the most holy sacrament of the altar, and in the hearts of His faithful people everywhere."

Isn't it wonderful to see His people gathered specifically to glorify Him and worship Him? It is in the Church where we see the bows and the genuflections – the smitten breast – the eyes uplifted towards heaven at the elevations – the prayers – confessions – and hymns of praise and adoration. What a gathering of God's people!

So what do we get out of all of this? Attending Church with our brothers and sisters in Christ should inspire us with great attachment. "Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." (Ps. 26:8) It teaches us what our chief business is in the Church. It is to know the way of the Lord and to see His power and glory. It teaches us to be more intimately acquainted with His mind and will for us. "Not my will but Thine be done" Should be our prayer. WE see our friends in Church – of course – and that is also wonderful! We hear the Word of God through the Epistles and Gospels – and through the sermons as well. All of this is profitable for our souls. But you know – the great end to the worship of the Church is not answered – unless – unless we know more and enjoy more – of the knowledge and love

of God. That's it! All other things are but the means designed to lead us to this great end.

How are you doing with your evangelism efforts as individual members of the Body of Christ? You know – you can't shrug off this duty by saying: "That's the job of the clergy." You have to be committed to it and not simply involved in it. Let me give you an illustration. The chicken that provided the eggs for your breakfast is involved. The pig that provided you with the bacon, however – is most definitely committed. Each one of you should be anxious to bring your relatives and friends and neighbors into this wonderful Anglican Catholic way of the Lord.

Don't you agree that by bringing them to the Lord's house – they may be blessed. The real truth may come into their minds. God may meet them – not only in the way of involvement – but also in the way of commitment. The house of God then may just become the spiritual birth-place of their immortal souls; for "the way of God is in his sanctuary."

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On a personal note...

I am delighted to be with you again at Christ Church Parish. Lorraine's illness prevented me from visiting with you last year. She wanted me to visit with you – but I didn't want to leave her side.

But - I do have my grandson Nick with me on this trip. I hope he hasn't been bored to death! He's been a great help to me since Lorraine entered the gates of larger life last December. Now I want you to know that I am extremely proud of him. He works 8 hours a day – 6 days a week – and sometimes overtime. He goes to school two evenings a week from 6pm. until 8 p.m. – AND he goes to Mass on Sunday Mornings!

Thank you for taking time off work to travel with me Nick!