

Episcopal Identity: Incarnational & Sacramental



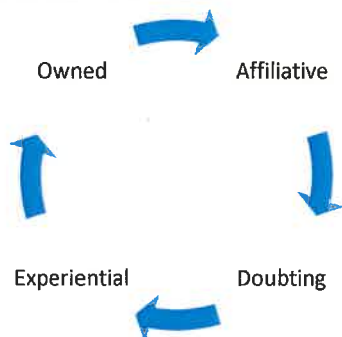
Contours of the Christian Life
Saint Mark's Cathedral
March 13, 2024

Goals for this class

- Gain understanding into meaning and purpose of sacraments
- Appreciation for Anglican spirituality and sensibilities
- Invitation to the Sacred Now (sacramental life)
- Explore ways in which we subvert the possibilities of sacramental life

***Presupposition: Every person is called to sacramental life*

Westerhoff's Model of Faith

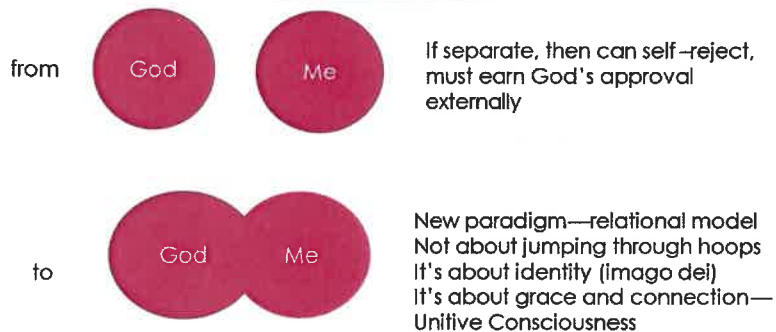


Incarnational Worldview

- presence of God woven into fabric of life and creation
- Opposite of faith is anxiety (the failure to recognize God in midst of life)
- One world imbued with goodness
- Sacramental



Shift to Incarnational Matrix



Anglican Identity: Sacramental Theology

Sacrament: “an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace” (BCP, p. 857)

What is grace? (Catechism): God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved.

The grace (charis) offered in the sacrament is on a continuum in at least three ways:

1. Common element—divine gift (transformation)—cosmic, social, ecological, etc.
2. Time-space (with Christ, communion of saints, heavenly banquet)—anamnesis (memory)
3. Forgiveness-healing (Eucharist is a form of healing in its own rite/right)

Anglican spirituality is corporate → individual

Two Great Sacraments—Dominical sacraments

Other sacramental rites—they are means of grace, but not necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and Eucharist are.



Confirmation—expression of mature commitment to Christ

Ordination—giving authority and grace of HS to bishops, priests, deacons

Matrimony—lifelong union, grace to fulfill their vows

Reconciliation—confess and given assistance of pardon and grace of absolution

Unction—grace given for healing of spirit, mind and body

Not limited to these seven...

Life as Sacrament

- conveys God’s presence (outward and visible sign...)
- evokes experience, memory

Sacramental Living

- Think of it as a journey (process) (story)
 - Inward journey (in, down and through)—Know Thyself
 - Outward (in community, listening)—Know Thyself in relation
- Liminal spaces (thresholds, leaving the old, but not quite in the new)
- Sacramental wisdom will likely be found at special (sacred) points:
 - Mission/Purpose (world’s deep hunger meets with your gladness)
 - Resonates with God’s dream for life on earth (kingdom)
 - Helps us remember who we are (re-ligio)
 - Grounded in Scripture, Tradition and Reason (Experience)
- Every person is “called” (vocare) to sacramental life (more on that next week)

The Marks of Anglican Spirituality

1. Pragmatic (practiced, aescetical)
2. Corporate (incarnational)
3. Liturgical (laos-tourgeia= work of the people)
4. Sacramental (the means of grace)
5. Mystical (union with God)

--it is Common Prayer, grounded in biblical truths and narratives of lives, including our own.

Anglican Spirituality is counter-intuitive in its willingness to hold tension in the *Three-Legged Stool*



- It is informed by Scripture, Tradition, and Reason
 - It relies heavily on Scripture as the central narrative of God's Salvation History
 - But it does not engage Scripture literally—it is always read and interpreted contextually
 - It is traditional,
 - yet always evolving, informed by the incarnate manifestation of Christ's Body, the Church, at a particular time and place.
 - It is grounded in reasoned discourse,
 - and yet it is not an individual system of devotion or meditation—that is a product of western individualism
 - “meaning” doesn't come ultimately from individuation or “mental prayer” or “spiritual but not religious”, but rather from the communal practice of worship.
- It is the Via Media—the hard road of ambiguity (but not ambivalence)
 - Questions are honored,
 - Doubt is acknowledged as integral to a mature faith
 - But it is NOT “Anything Goes” (false egalitarianism/individualism)

Theologically speaking...

- Anglican Spirituality is Prayer Book Spirituality
 - more than a *missal* in which the liturgical work “gets done”
 - more than compilation of liturgical manuals or a liturgical script
 - not an end in itself
 - the “ascetical” work of Prayer Book Spirituality is the *Regulum* (rule, practice) which makes it possible for the community's liturgical/sacramental life to be the basis (the foundation) for the spiritual life of the community's members.
 - Personal devotions are recollections/extensions of what the Church does corporately, not vice versa.



--*Anglican Spirituality*, Wm Wolf, ed.

Challenges to Sacramental Living

Parker Palmer's Five Shadows (from Let Your Life Speak, 1999)

- Deep insecurity about identity and worth
- Universe is essentially hostile
- Functional atheism
- Fear of the natural chaos of life
- Denial of death

Universal temptation: false god created to serve false self

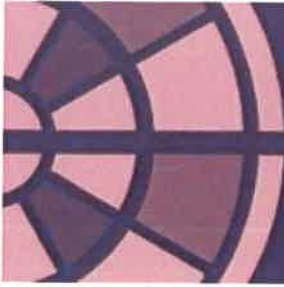
- A domesticated god to fit our own agenda

Primal anxiety: deep sense of inadequacy

- Leads to fear of rejection (dependent on external approval)
- Response: spiritual practice of being awake to compassion and community

The Spiritual Work of healing from this spiritual dis-ease is to go in, down and through, and to match the true self with reality we see (incarnational, good, God's presence, etc.)

Gerald May: *"Searching beneath anxiety, one will find fear. And beneath fear hurt will be discovered. Beneath the hurt will be guilt. Beneath the guilt lie rage and hatred. But do not stop with this, for beneath the rage lies frustrated desire. Finally beneath and beyond desire, is love. In every feeling, look deeply. Explore without ceasing. At bottom, love is."* (Simply Sane, p. 87)



BAPTISMAL THEOLOGY

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

—*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308

BACKGROUND FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

- From the Greek *baptismos*, meaning ritual washing.
- Jewish practice, *Tvilah*, a purification ritual of immersion in water, which is required for conversion to Judaism.

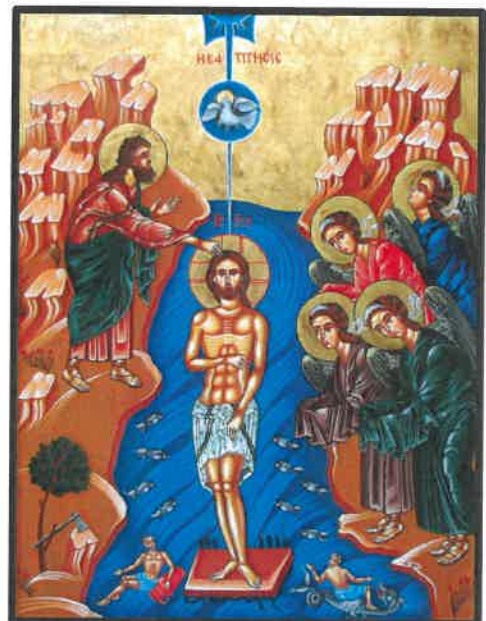
BIBLICAL PRESENTATIONS OF BAPTISM

Old Testament

- Noah and the Flood (Genesis 5:32-10:1)
- “I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric.” —Ezekiel 16:8-10

New Testament

- John the Baptist baptized Jesus (Matthew 3, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34)
- Union with Christ (Rom 6:3-7, Col 2:11-12)
- Sealed with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13, Eph 1:13-14)
- Inward Cleansing and remission of sins (Acts 22:16, 1 Cor 6:11, Eph 5:25-27)
- Spirit-led regeneration and entrance into a new life (Titus 3:5)



BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

- Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as God’s children and makes us members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 858).
- Rite of Holy Baptism—*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 299-308
- Prayer over the water, p. 306—recalls the use of water in salvation history.

TIMELESSNESS OF GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE

- The grace of God comes before our response.
- All are beloved by God, before and after their baptism.
 - Being baptized is not magic. It does not give us God's love, but makes us more aware of the love God already has for us.
- Adopted by God into God's family, the Church, and given God's life to share.
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY

- The covenant established in baptism begins the identity of a Christian.
- Baptism is not an end moment of perfection, but the start of a journey along a spiritual path.
- Baptism incorporates a person officially into the Church community.
- Officially become part of the ministry and mission of the Church.

SACRAMENTAL CONNECTION

- Symbols of baptism
 - Oil, water, candle
- One of the two great sacraments of the Bible
 - Jesus was baptized and instituted the Eucharist.
- One of the three sacraments of initiation into the Christian Church—the others being the Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

BAPTISMAL COVENANT

- Covenantal Relationship
- *I will, with God's help*

CONSTANT RENEWAL

- Each time we make the sign of the cross we are remembering our baptism.
- Many people anoint themselves with Holy Water when entering or leaving the church as a reminder of their baptism.
- The more we live into our baptismal identity, the more our lives will intentionally and unintentionally be shaped into the life of Christ.

FURTHER READING

John H. Westerhoff, *Living Faithfully as a Prayer Book People* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2004).

Samuel Torvend, *Flowing Water Uncommon Birth* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2011).

Rowan Williams, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).