

Bishop Menees on DUTY OF THE LAITY #1



For many of us just hearing the word "duty" chafes... it is an obligation beyond ourselves and for many of us that doesn't sit well. We want to do what we want- when we want- and the way we want. This seems especially true with the Boomer Generation - (generally understood as those born between 1946 - 1963). The "sixties" were a time of rebellion and freedom and that meant from all outside obligations and "duties."

However, we, as followers of Jesus Christ, are not about rebellion and freedom for "self" but rebellion from the ways of the world and freedom in Jesus Christ!

To that end, as followers of Jesus Christ, our first obligation and duty is not to self but to Jesus. Of course, this isn't new nor was it new with Jesus. God Himself was quite clear with Moses and the people of Israel when he laid out the Ten Commandments - ***"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me"*** (Exodus 20: 2-3) ***"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."*** (Exodus 20: 8-10a).

With God's commandments in mind then the first duty of the laity in the Anglican Church makes perfect sense... ***"It shall be the duty of every member of the church: 1. To worship God, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, every Lord's Day in a Church unless reasonably prevented;"*** (ACNA Constitutions & Canon Title 1 Section 2).

It should be noted that the duty is not to the Church, but to God. We do not worship the Church, but God. And when we are in church worshipping Him, God is pleased.

Now knowing human nature when we read this, first of the ten duties of the laity, many will seek to get around it saying... "Well is worship in a church really that important? God reveals Himself in nature why can't I worship Him at the beach surfing or in the mountains skiing?" My answer to that is the same that I gave to a former parishioner to posed just that question... Because our worship of God is dynamic - it involves our speaking, and singing, and listening in silence. It involves our being challenged in the Word and in the Sermon and in receiving the sacrament. When was the last time you went surfing or skiing and were challenged to examine your life and repent of sin or challenged to reach out to the poor and needy, the sick and imprisoned? When was the last time you were surfing and sang a hymn of praise to God or offer your tithes to Him?

The second aspect of this duty that folks will ask is... what is meant by "reasonably prevented?" Well, let me say what is not "reasonably prevented" *"My aunt Carol is visiting and we're going out to breakfast"*... well for goodness sake take aunt Carol to church! Or *"my 49ers/Giants/Sharks are playing on TV"*.... one word - TiVo.

OK so what is "reasonably prevented?" Well illness; please don't come to church ill and infect others or get worse yourself! Employment in another reasonable prevent - where the employer requires your working on the Lord's Day... but then seek to worship at a mid-week service.

Ultimately, God only requires of us what will be good for us and let me promise you this; if you faithfully attend worship on the Lord's Day, in your parish, you will be blessed. Our worship does not only bless God but blesses us too and God wants to bless us.

Bishop Eric

Bishop Menees on DUTY OF THE LAITY #2

(With Duty #1...) we examined the first of the duties of the Laity is to worship God in church every Sunday because our corporate relationship with God is very important. So too is our personal relationship with God. That leads to the second of the Duties of the Laity: ***"To engage regularly in the reading and study of Holy Scripture and the Doctrine of the Church as found in Article I of the Constitution of this Church;"***

Why is it that daily bible study so important? Here are six reasons why

1. *Because we want to know God better.* If I want to draw closer to my wife, Florence, I need to spend time with her. Well the same is true for us and our relationship with God. From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 God reveals Himself and His Will for His creation!

2. *Because we want to life life better.* Because the Bible speaks to every aspect of Life the Lord directs through his Word. The truth is, the more we read and study the Word of God the less "lost" we feel and the more grounded we are. As King David wrote : ***"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*** (Psalm 119:105 ESV) If you are tired of feeling lost and alone, spend 30 minutes a day with the Lord and I promise you will be blessed.

3. *Because we want to grow in closer in our relationship with God.* Jesus responded to temptation by telling the Devil that ***"Man can not***

live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4 ESV)

4. *To reveal false teachings.* The Bible tells us that in the last days (the time we now live in!) there will be lots of false teachings and false prophets. (Mt24:3-5; Mk 13:3-6; Mk13:21-22). That's why it's so important to know what the Bible says, so we can compare all teachings with the Word of God. The fact is that every teaching that doesn't agree with what the Word of God says is a false teaching! Therefore, compare every teaching with what the Bible says. If you aren't aware of what the Bible says, you can get cheated into almost anything.

5. *To know what you believe in.* The more of God's Word you know and act upon the stronger your faith will be (Rom 10:17).

6. *To always keep your Sword sharp!* The Bible is the sword that God has given us, so we can conquer all the temptations we meet (Eph. 6:17). A sword that isn't sharp does no good. Therefore, we need to keep it in good condition and sharpen it (improve our Bible knowledge) every day so it's always sharp and ready to be used!

Bishop Eric

Bishop Menees on DUTY OF THE LAITY #3

As we continue in our study of the Duties of the Laity, as proscribed in the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America, we come to the third of those duties, which is to be faithful to our baptismal vows. Specifically our duty is "To observe (our) baptismal vows, to lead an upright and sober life, and not give scandal to the Church;"

This weekend I was with the good people of St. Paul's, Bakersfield, and in observing the Confirmands as they renewed their vows I was struck with how very powerful those vows are.

Our baptisms are based in a profound belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - we state this belief in the Baptismal Covenant in which we publicly affirm our orthodox Christian faith.

The observation of our baptismal vows begins and ends with our orthodox faith handed down throughout the ages from Christian to Christian, Father to Son, Mother to Daughter since the time that Jesus passed it on directly to the Apostles. That faith is lived out in our baptismal vows:

Question: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the Prayers?

Answer: I will, with God's help.

The teaching we follow is not new, it is not what we invent or the world invents but as found in the Bible revealing God's love for us in his son Jesus Christ. That teaching is not in a vacuum but in the Church where we gather with fellow believers to share in the sacraments instituted by Jesus and lived out through the centuries.

Question: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Answer: I will, with God's help.

Our baptismal vows recognize that we are fallen creatures in need of God's saving Grace and that, indeed we do sin. We are to examine our lives and repent when necessary. I strongly recommend the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The book of James encourages us to "confess your sins to one another and pray for each other." (James 5:16) In the church we share in God's Grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and are restored in our relationships with God and our brother.

Question: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Answer: I will with God's help.

As baptized Christians it is our honor and duty to share the Good News of Christ and that begins with our willingness to share with others about our personal relationship with Jesus. Of course, that relationship is also lived out corporately in the church but ultimately, we can and must share with others the light of Christ in a cold and dark world.

Question: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.

Answer: I will, with God's help.

"Let us make man in our image after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26) All human beings are created in the image of God and are due respect and dignity. It is important to note that this respect and dignity begins from the moment of conception and lasts until the moment of natural death. In addition, scripture tells us in the prologue of the

gospel of John, "And to all who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12) All people are due respect and dignity but not all people are "Children of God." Our brother and sister Christians are due our love and honor.

Question: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? Answer: I will, with God's help.

To strive for justice and peace is the duty of every Christian because Jesus demonstrated the same in his life. It is important to understand that Justice & tolerance are not synonymous and peace is not simply the absence of violence. Justice flows from God who cries out through his prophet Micah "O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Each and every one of these vows is supremely important but it is also imperative to note that the response to each question is, "I will, with God's help." Left to our own devices we will not be able to fulfill any aspect of our baptismal vows. However, if we invite God the Holy Spirit into our lives and allow Him to move and shape us then, in fact, we cannot help but live out these vows.

And so I would end this Bishop's Note with a special invitation to all baptized Christians to take a moment to ask God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to move in and through you in the completion of his divine will in your life. You see, the second half of the third duty of the laity is to live a godly and sober life not causing scandal in the church. If, in fact, we are living out our baptismal vows, then we need not worry about living godly and sober lives or causing scandal to His Church!

Bishop Eric