

THE KEYS



Church of St. Peter the Apostle
Anglican Catholic Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic States
www.dmas-acc.org

The Rev. Peter Geromel OHI, Th.M, Rector
October 2021
<https://stpetersacc.org>

The Rector's Ramble (In and Out of Brambles)

Sikhism and the importance of Truth.

When I was growing up, my favorite movie was *Zulu* (1964), debuting Michael Caine, about the Battle of Rorke's Drift fought in South Africa from January 22nd to the 23rd, 1879. There 150 British Soldiers defended a small station against 3,000 to 4,000 Zulu braves just after a force of 20,000 Zulus had decimated a column of 1,800 British soldiers at Isandlwana.

I was recently struck by an astonishing film *Kesari*, about a similar incident at the Battle of Saragarhi which was fought between the British Raj and Afghan tribesman on September 12, 1897. There 21 Sikh soldiers fought against 12 to 24,000 Orakzai and Afridi tribesman. Saragarhi was a post between Forts Lockhart and Gulistan and was there to communicate between the two strongholds. The Afghans attacked the middle post in preparation to assault the other forts on the frontier. The Sikhs all chose to die to delay the assault on the other forts providing critical time, Alamo style, so that the other forts would be able to survive the insurgents. Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, the last surviving soldier, and the one communicating to the British command by heliograph (hence the reason we have such accurate details about the battle), after asking permission by heliograph to take up his rifle when the rest of his comrades were dead, was said to have personally killed 40 Afghans as he was burned to death. His final moments were spent giving the Sikh battle cry, "One will be blessed eternally, who says that God is the ultimate truth!" Like so many other attempts to avenge the relief of Vienna by the Polish-Lithuanian knights on September 12th, 1683, this attack by Afghan Muslims, turned against them - it became a tribute to the opposing side. Like the veneration of the martyr-bishop of Tbilisi in Georgia by the Orthodox Christians, or our own remembrance of 9/11, the Sikhs commemorate the 21 lion-warriors who fought to the last man annually on September 12th.

Who are the Sikhs? And why are they so valiant? *Sikh* comes from the root word for "disciple," "seeker," or "learner". It is a newer religion but now the fifth largest in the world! The first Guru of this religion was Guru Nanak (1469-1539). The tenth guru, Gobind Singh (1666-1708) named the Sikh scripture as the final Guru, being an eleventh "living guru". This is a syncretic scripture, containing some Dharmic (basic Hindu) ideas, such as reincarnation, but also monotheistic ideas concerning the "One Formless Being" - being comparable to basic Neo-Platonic notions of God being "beyond being" - *Akaal purkh* ("beyond time and space") and *nirankar* ("without form"). Guru Nanak summarized things, "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living." Their notion of spiritual warfare is to "transform" the "Five Thieves" - lust, rage, greed, attachment, and ego.

Their concept of the brotherhood of man (since humans are a manifestation of the divine) is strong, and this led to a casteless system (in reality some aspects of caste still remain), whereby all men and women have the same last name, Singh (lion) for men and Kaur (lioness) for women. It is derived as a surname from the warrior castes of Hinduism. Mughal rulers martyred two gurus and this persecution triggered the formation of the Khalsa in 1699 and these mighty warriors are also called saint-soldiers. In this way, Sikhism is different from other reforms of Hinduism such as Buddhism or especially Jainism, where the conception "do no harm" is very important. In this respect, Sikhism reminds one of the Books of Maccabees where they chose to fight on the Sabbath rather than be slaughtered on it, and where Judas Maccabeus was described as "like a lion in his deeds, like a lion's cub roaring for prey."

Sikhs are well-known for their hospitality and works of mercy, especially because all humans are made in the image of God (or, for them, are the highest level of reincarnation). A liberal might respond, look, Christians and Sikhs are really the same! But this is not the case, obviously. Nevertheless, we might ask ourselves, in the places where Christian virtues and Sikh virtues overlap, have we fallen down at all in our witness as Christians? Are they doing a better job than us in some respect or another?

Furthermore, let us remember that anybody can be brought to Christ, and it is sometimes not because of the contrast between his heathen beliefs and Christianity but because of a similarity or two or three. To this end,

Bishop Whipple wrote, as many have, about Celtic beliefs in pagan Britain and Gaul: “The Druidic religion of Britain was more favorable than any religion known for the reception of Christianity in its teaching of the immortality of the soul, the need of an atonement, and the spiritual nature of God.” They also, like Sikhism, had a very strong sense of the immortal reality of Truth. From Myles Dillon we have this observation, “In Ireland . . . we have stories in which an Act of Truth has magical power. (It is not a question of virtue being rewarded: it is the magical power of Truth itself.)” The *Book of Leinster*, an instruction book for the Irish High King, proclaims,

Let him magnify the truth, it will magnify him.

Let him strengthen the truth, it will strengthen him.

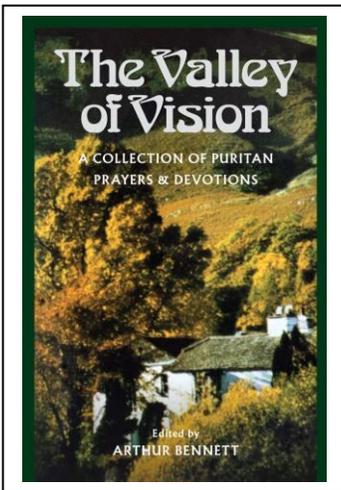
Let him guard the truth, it will guard him.

Let him exalt the truth, it will exalt him.

For so long as he guards the truth, good shall not fail him and his rule shall not perish.

How might we bring Sikhism into Christ? Now you know more about them, if you happen to meet with one in the area around Tech. Buy him or her a cup of coffee and let them tell you about their religion and their culture. That’s always a good way to break the ice.

A New Book in our Parish Library – *The Valley of Vision*, a collection of Puritan prayers, many of which are from clergymen within the Church of England. You will find them fascinating for their lengthy, litany-like cadence. Such is not an unusual fashion for the prayers of the 17th Century, and Lancelot Andrewes *Private Prayers* are often similarly formatted.



A Church Revitalization Seminar – came to St. Paul’s in Lexington recently. Fr. Geromel was able to sit in on a few minutes of this, as he was picking up some Canon Wooley’s books from his daughter (visiting her son at VMI) anyway. Led by the *American Anglican Council*, the seminar was not fully within the doctrinal standards of the Anglican Catholic Church but had some useful highlights.

5 stages of Renewal (to be done in *this* order) were reviewed:

- *Personal Renewal* (read Mark 12:30).
- *Relational Renewal* (read Mark 12:31).
- *Missional Renewal* (read John 20:21).
- *Structural Renewal* (read Matt. 9:17).
- *Cultural Renewal* (read Acts 5:28).

Concerning *Relational Renewal* (and this does not really apply to St. Peter’s but is a common problem that this writer has seen himself) the presenter outlined that often people will go to the Anglican or Episcopal Church because that is what they are culturally and that one can serve, say, on an Altar Guild with someone but not actually really like the person. Unfortunately, if people in a church don’t like each other, they can kind of “sniff it out”. Additionally, churches often “skip steps” moving directly to structural renewal (more parking space, or a new sign) without renewing themselves on the other levels first!

Finally, one incident will reveal a problematic perspective often plaguing our churches. One person attending commented that perhaps, instead of trying to evangelize college students (who leave after a few years), they should focus on the faculty. Another person piped in, “They’re all heathens!” The seminar presenter grabbed ahold of that teachable moment, responding, “That’s what you want, heathens!”

News and Information – Don’t forget **ADDITIONAL MASS** time on Saturdays at 5 PM.

Vestry is scheduled for October 20th at 7:30 PM. A mass will precede it at 7 PM, celebrating St. Luke, EV.M.

October 17th we will begin a new Adult Sunday school topic. We will be reading thru and discussing *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (The Manual of a Christian Knight) by Erasmus. Your copy may be found on the piano in the parish house. If you wish to donate to defray the cost, \$20 is the appropriate amount. Many thanks!

OCTOBER, 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
[31] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS TRINITY XXII	LEGEND: HC - Holy Communion; FHE – Festal Holy Eucharist; HE - Holy Eucharist; SS – Sunday School; PG - Prayer Group; EP – Evening Prayer; MP – Morning Prayer; P&HU – Prayers and Holy Unction				[1]	[2] 5:00 p.m. HC
[3] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS TRINITY XVIII	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7] 12 noon HC	[8]	[9] 5:00 p.m. HC
[10] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS TRINITY XIX	[11]	[12]	[13]	[14] 12 noon HC	[15]	[16] 5:00 p.m. HC
[17] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS TRINITY XX	[18]	[19]	[20] 7:00 p.m. HC 7:30 p.m. Vestry ST. LUKE	[21] 12 noon HC	[22]	[23] 5:00 p.m. HC
[24] 8:00 a.m. MP & HC 10:00 a.m. HE, SS TRINITY XXI	[25]	[26]	[27]	[28] 12 noon HC	[29]	[30] 5:00 p.m. HC

IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

If you cannot fulfill your assigned duty because of an urgent reason, PLEASE SECURE A REPLACEMENT.

Week beginning Sunday →	October 3	October 10	October 17	October 24	October 31
Altar Guild	M. Slayton	B. Higginbotham	V. Williams	M. Slayton	B. Higginbotham
	B. Higginbotham	J. Butterfield	B. Higginbotham	B. Higginbotham	J. Butterfield
Coffee Hour	C. Pappas	V. Williams	E. Paisley	C. deRosset	L. Olver
Ushers	P. Pappas	G. Terrell	M. Slayton	D. Drysdale	M. Slayton
	L. Brossy	D. Drysdale	P. Pappas	L. Brossy	G. Terrell
Epistoler 8 a.m.	A. Butterfield	G. Mauney	A. Butterfield	G. Mauney	A. Butterfield
Epistoler 10 a.m.	T. Paisley	C. Von Claparede	G. Terrell	T. Paisley	P. Williams
Server	P. Williams	T. Paisley	C. Von Claparede	P. Williams	P. Williams
Crucifer	W. Paisley	W. Paisley	W. Paisley	W. Paisley	C. Von Claparede

2021 Vestry (term end): Allen Butterfield (‘21), Dan Drysdale (‘23), Phil Pappas (‘21), Marnie Slayton (‘22), Clemens Von Claparede (‘22), Phil Williams (‘23)