



The Mike

The Newsletter of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Studio City, CA

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Anne Rice and My Religion

By the Reverend Canon Mark Shier

Sermon given at St. Michael's on August 8, 2010

I have been slandered. But I've never been slandered by a celebrity so focused on my religious convictions. You may have read in the past week or so the dramatic exit of author Anne Rice from the Christian (read Roman) Church. Anne Rice is the author of those boring vampire books and even worse books about Christ. Let me read to you her recent screed: "Today I quit being a Christian. I'm out," she wrote. "I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being 'Christian' or to being part of Christianity. It's simply impossible for me to 'belong' to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious and deservedly infamous group. For 10 years, I've tried. I've failed. I'm an outsider. My conscience will allow nothing else.... In the name of Christ, I refuse to be anti-gay. I refuse to be anti-feminist. I refuse to be anti-artificial birth control. I refuse to be anti-Democrat. I refuse to be anti-secular humanism. I refuse to be anti-science. I refuse to be anti-life. In the name of Christ, I quit Christianity and being Christian. Amen."

As I read this the first time, I kept wanting to raise my hand to say, "But, but, but... There are lots of Christians who agree with you, especially in the Episcopal Church." My religion accepts:

- gay and lesbian people
- women and their ministries
- birth control as a wise and holy calling
- Democrats (though some Episcopal Republicans may disagree!)
- secular humanists as honest seekers after truth
- science as a way of knowing about God's amazing creation
- abundant life as the right of every human being as a child of God.

I think Ms Rice has been going to the wrong church. I do plead us Episcopalians, along with so many other Christians, guilty as sometimes hostile, quarrelsome, disputatious, and infamous. But no one's perfect. I could say the same thing about my fellow Americans, but the answer is not to take your football and go home, not to leave this imperfect union of

citizens. In both country and church, one has to develop a thick skin and realize that some folks are just plain crazy. Don't let them get to you. I'd say, "Keep up the good fight," except that that could be interpreted as hostile, quarrelsome, disputatious, and infamous.



So today I would like to share with you some of the meaning that I find in my life in Christ and in Christ's community.

Here is the first of six. I follow Jesus of Nazareth because I think He, of all

religious leaders and systems, deals most powerfully with evil in our lives.

Some religions deal with evil by saying that it doesn't really exist; it is only an illusion. Thus, we have Buddhism in which the primary task is to realize that everything is merely illusion and then to free oneself from the desires that bind us to those illusions. I find this approach unsatisfactory for two reasons: 1) I cannot imagine God going to such elaborate lengths to deceive His creatures, and, 2) I find too much reality in my experience of the world to be able really to believe that it is all a dream.

Some religions re-define evil as good. Thus there are some sects of Hinduism which say that murder and sexual excess are approved and even demanded by their particular deities. The result of such a view is so destructive to the individual and to society that I simply cannot accept that these are responsible, valid perspectives on the nature of divinity.

Some religions stand helplessly in the face of evil, not knowing how to deal with it, leaving humankind to be victim to forces that neither man nor God can or will control. As much as I love our Jewish sisters and brothers, I sometimes feel that this is their view of our place in the universe. I cannot accept that God has abandoned us to our own devices and that our major religious task is simply to accept that fact.

Here a disclaimer. I have trouble enough understanding my own religion, and I may have gotten someone else's wrong. If so, I humbly apologize. My mistake comes not from animosity but from feeble attempts to understand. Please forgive.

I think Jesus did it right. He let evil do its worst to Him—evil killed Him—and then He annulled it by coming back to life. Evil is the sum of all the forces in the universe that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God. From our personal point of view, the worst that could happen to us is that we cease to be, in any kind of meaningful way. That is what we call death and that is what evil did to Jesus. There was nothing more that could be done to Him. So when the body, mind, and spirit of Jesus were once more united and began to function as a unity, to live, as we know the term, there was nothing more that death could demonstrate. The power of God was indeed greater than the power of destruction. The kingdom of Satan was plundered, laid waste, devastated. And in annihilating the worst that evil could do through death, Jesus also demolished all the lesser evils: loneliness, anger, fear, misunderstanding, cruelty, alienation, illness, pain—the list is large but finite. Sometimes it may not seem as if these

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My Religion *from page 1*

things have lost their power, especially when we must endure them, but the truth is that they are dying realities, destined someday to be no more. Christ has won the victory over all evil.

The second reason I have given myself to Jesus Christ is that He is the answer to the utter loneliness of the human condition. No matter how close we are to those we love, they cannot share in the very deepest core of our being; our own death is only one among many experiences that no other human being can share with us. In Jesus, God joined himself to our human nature; that means that God joined himself to me. Without overpowering our individuality, without absorbing us into His own immensity and thus destroying us, God has yet made himself as close to me as my own spirit, my own mind, my own heartbeat. When I discover that God with me, surrounding me, confronting me, He is not an alien force, unknown, arbitrary, dreadful; He is a power beyond all measure that is at the same time just like me. He understands me and my condition.

The third reason I have given myself to Jesus Christ is that in Him God helps me. The very power that created the universe, made the suns and stars, shaped the mountains and the oceans, brings a baby to birth, wants to come to my aid, assist, encourage, promote my welfare. The One who supplied energy to hold atoms and subatomic particles together wants to hold me. The One who laid out the dynamics of the universe beginning before the Big Bang has a design for me and my life. As good as I am at living, I am still terribly weak, and in my powerlessness I need that backing.

The fourth reason I have given myself to Jesus Christ is that He has given meaning and purpose to my life. Have you ever wondered what it is that God wants of every human being? What is it that is so important to learn and to do that nothing else matters in comparison? Why is it that it really doesn't fundamentally matter whether or not one is a billionaire or a pauper, talented or a nerd, handsome or ugly, American or Mongolian, male or female, healthy or dying, princess or maid, or any of the other possibilities in our lives? God unveiled himself in Jesus Christ and showed us what He wants of us. It is love. St. John says it better than I ever could in his first letter to his friends, preserved in the New Testament: "Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him" (1 John 4:7-9). Isn't that incredible? "Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God." It doesn't say anything about believing right or acting right or thinking right

or anything else like that. It simply points out love as the single most important characteristic for us in our relationship with God. And in His own words Jesus commands the same thing. Listen to Him as St. John tells us of the Master's words just before He is betrayed and begins His passion: "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another."

You see, we do know what the purpose of life is, no matter who or what we are. It is the same for all: to learn love and to do love.

The fifth reason I have given myself to Jesus Christ is because He has given to me and to every other human being eternal life. It was not originally the Christian understanding that the soul is immortal, that it cannot die. That is an idea that came into Christianity through Greek philosophy. The early Church understood that in our natural state women and men cease to exist at death. There is nothing in us that of itself is strong enough to survive that alien experience of death that we were never meant to know. But if we cannot live forever by nature, we can do so by gift. God has given us joyful life without end with Him as pure, unearned gift; it's what Christians call grace, but it is still gift. Because Jesus loves you and me beyond any measuring, and because of His obedient serving through His willing union with us even through death, and because God raised Him from death to life again, we shall all live in ecstasy with Him forever.

The sixth and last reason I have given myself to Jesus Christ is that, for all its quarrelsomeness, hostility, disputatiousness, and infamy, He did establish a community of those who trust in Him. This community, the Church, is inhabited by God's Spirit—strengthened, guided, judged, reformed, graced, by God's Spirit. God knows, and we know, the Church is not perfect, not even close, but it is what we have, it is what God-in-Christ intended, and though we fall often, our call is not to curl up in a ball and die, but to get up and keep slogging on. That's the real Christian pilgrimage, the real Christian courage, the real Christian martyrdom.

That is why I have given myself to Jesus Christ and to His community, the Church.

In closing, let us pray for those who shall choose a rector for this parish, this spiritual community: Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The full text of Canon Shier's sermons at St. Michael's may be read at www.stmikessc.org/sermons_index.htm.

Thanksgiving for a Job Well Done

To: Leonard Harman, Ed Sugar, and Preston Fray for all their hard work toward making the new flooring in the church a reality.

Please give these individuals heartfelt thanks for their contributions.

In the months that follow, the Vestry will continue to recognize the gifts of work and time that help keep St. Michael's a beautiful and useful campus, and a thriving parish.

September Birthdays

Day	Name
1	Charlotte Oliver
2	Jane Mason
6	Margie Mullen
8	Amador Rondilla
11	Sarah Lentz
12	Samuel Dunning
13	Barbara Beckner
18	Gail Wright
18	Kyle Grace
19	Jonathan Heuer
22	William Haddock
24	Martha Shaw Zofie Basta
25	Wesley King David Connors
26	Julie Meine

September Anniversaries

Day	Name
6	David Connors & Alex Morales

Should you be listed here? Or, if you wish to leave your birthday or anniversary unpublished, give the church office a call or e-mail (administrator@stmikessc.org) to let us know. *Please Note: Birthdays and Anniversaries will be celebrated on the last Sunday of each month.*

Read the MIKE Online! All you do is go to the website, www.stmikessc.org, and click on "THE MIKE ONLINE." Back issues are available there as well. And while you're at the website, you can shop at Amazon.com through its link. St. Michael's gets a small rebate for each purchase made through this link.



From the Vestry

Anne Kelly, Senior Warden
David Connors, Junior Warden

This month, we continue with our update on current issues and activities at St. Michael's, in order to keep you fully informed.



Rector Search

As we indicated in our summer letter to the parish, we have decided to partner with the Bishop's office and become more involved in the search for a new rector. A Search Committee has been appointed, consisting of the current Senior and Junior Wardens; our Treasurer, Margie Mullen; our former Senior Warden, Betty Ferrell; and a newer member of our parish and Vestry, Rodney Dickson.

The Bishop's office plans to provide us a list of 5 to 8 pre-screened candidates whom we will then interview, with input from the Vestry and the parish. The Reverend Canon Joanna Satorius, the Canon for Formation and Deployment, plans to have those names to us by the end of the summer.

It is important that we see this process

as a time of spiritual discernment, not as an opportunity to hire an employee. Our parish and our new rector will be partnering together to serve each other and respond in love to the needs we see around us in our parish and in our community. We are looking for a spiritual leader who can lead us into a deeper knowledge of God, and how God wants us to live. This requires that each of us be in prayer and listen prayerfully to each other in the weeks and months ahead.

Let's each commit to praying for open hearts and minds, and asking God to help us in this discernment process.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known and from you no secrets are hid. Open my heart to your will for me and our parish. Help me to see where my own desires, needs, and motivations may be getting in the way. Empty me; purify me; guide me as I seek to serve your will and your will alone. As I pray the Lord's Prayer, help me to hear anew the familiar words, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Sanctuary Upgrading

By the time you read this, the new sanctuary carpet and flooring will be in place. This has been an exciting and unexpected development over the summer. We are thrilled at the generosity of the parish and friends outside the parish, which has resulted in such a significant improvement of our worship environment. A very special thanks to Leonard Harmon, Ed Sugar, Preston Fray, and Jane Wilson for their involvement in making this dream a reality.

Important Upcoming Dates

- September 11: Angel Awards Dinner
- September 19: Welcome Back, Sunday!

On September 19 we will have a special service to welcome everyone back from summer holidays and begin the new season of our education and program activities.



Treasurer's Corner *Margie Mullen, Treasurer*

July 2010—Revenue and Expense Summary

	July Actual	July Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Total Revenue	\$ 21,914	\$ 28,254	\$ 188,451	\$ 200,379
Total Expense	26,584	30,524	252,091	277,589
Net	(\$ 4,670)	(\$ 2,270)	(\$ 63,640)	(\$ 77,210)

Food, Glorious Food

By Gail Green

In the musical "Oliver", Oliver Twist and the other orphan boys in that London workhouse sing about food as then yearn for real food instead of meager gruel:

*Food, glorious food!
What wouldn't we give for
That extra bit more —
That's all that we live for.
Why should we be fated to
Do nothing but brood
On food, magical food, wonderful food,
Marvelous food, fabulous food,*

Glorious, magical, wonderful, marvelous and

fabulous are those bags of food at the back of the Sanctuary—your weekly contributions to the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry. Our total poundage in June was 301, and for July 320. At this writing in mid-August, we are running a bit behind those monthly numbers. Let's try to add more as we go into September and the cooler months. Pick some of the items below from the Pantry's wish list and buy them with your own groceries. It's just like making use of reuseable bags at the market—find a way to remember them and remember the Pantry at the same time. Those who need food—and the numbers are still rising—will be able to eat and not brood on that "food, glorious food." Your support of our congregation's mission priority to eradicate

extreme hunger and poverty (the UN's Millenium Development Goal #1) is greatly needed and appreciated.

Pantry Wish List

- Baby food
- Peanut butter
- Canned food (no glass containers), all kinds esp. poptop cans
- Cereals and Pasta
- Powdered milk
- Tuna and other canned meats
- And also: can openers, disposable diapers, soap, toothpaste, disposable razors, personal care items



2010 Angel Awards

You are cordially invited to attend the fifth annual
Saint Michael's Angel Award Dinner

Angel Award Recipients

Shelley Marks
Mary Watanabe

Angel Emeritus

Lena Mitchell

Cherubim and Seraphim Honorees

W. Bruce Cameron, Writer * **Kathy Griffin**, Comedian
Cynthia Mazza * **Karen Marrs & Ron Salisbury** of El Cholo Restaurants

Saturday, September 11, 2010

6:00 p.m. Cocktail Reception * 7:00 p.m. Dinner, Ceremony, Comedy by Eddie Pepitone
and Silent Auction in the Parish Hall

Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church
3646 Coldwater Canyon Avenue, Studio City, CA * 818.763.9193

All Proceeds Benefit The Solar Panel Project

The Solar Panel Project first raised funds to install solar panels at St. Michael's and now works with non-profit organizations to help them achieve similar goals. Efforts are currently underway to install solar panels at the facilities of Meeting Every Need with Dignity (MEND) in Pacoima. MEND works to empower those in need by relieving the effects of poverty so they can work towards self sufficiency by providing counseling, medical and dental services, and other services.

Peter Ackerman to Visit St. Michael's Sunday, September 26

Our former parish administrator, Peter Ackerman, will be in town for his 30th high school reunion and will attend the 10:30 Eucharist at St. Michael's on Sunday, September 26. He looks forward to visiting old friends here.

Welcome Back Sunday, a New SMAA Tradition

Sunday, September 19

By Margie Mullen

At the 10:30 service on Sunday, September 19, we want to celebrate everyone coming back from their summer holidays, Adult Forums starting, childcare, Godly Play and youth groups having resumed the 12th.

We want to celebrate and demonstrate all the various ways parishioners have become involved and perhaps spur the uninvolved to find a place for themselves in the St. Michael's family. Our parish activities and programs help both parish members and the community at large. In fact, numerous people outside the parish have told us they are amazed at all that our small parish is able to do. Let's continue our good work by getting even more members of the parish involved.

Come and celebrate Sunday, September 19, with the returning choir, our September visiting priest, the Rev. Patricia O'Reilly, and the parading of ministries down the center aisle. Each ministry will have a table later at the coffee hour to answer your questions while you enjoy the Ice Cream Social that will be served.

Sharing Our Spiritual Stories

**Beginning Sunday,
September 19**

By Betsy Hailey

Sharing Our Spiritual Stories will be the theme of the fall adult forums. The series of one-on-one conversations with parishioners will begin at 9:30 on September 19 with our Senior Warden Anne Kelly. The conversations will be led by the three members of the Adult Ed Committee: Betsy Hailey, Phyllis Bracey, and Bruce Rankin. Please join us to share the stories behind the familiar faces you see at church. On September 26, Phyllis will talk to Tom Heuer and on October 3, Brooks and Kathleen Taylor will be in conversation with Bruce.



The Calendar

September 2010

Sunday Schedule • *Sunday Services are 8:00 am (no music) and 10:30 am (with music) in the Sanctuary.*
 • *Sunday School and Children's Church resume Sunday, September 12, beginning at 9:30.*
 • *Adult Forum resumes Sunday, September 19, beginning at 9:30.*
 • *Coffee Hour immediately follows the 10:30 am service unless otherwise noted.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 12:00 NOON Fourth Quarter Luncheon (CO)	4
5 Pentecost 15	6 <i>Labor Day— Parish Office Closed</i>	7 7:00 PM Transition Management Team (CO) 7:30 PM SMCOP (YL)	8	9 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)	10	11 6:00 PM Angel Award Dinner (PH)
12 Pentecost 16 9:30 AM Godly Play and Sunday School resume Children's Church resumes	13 6:15 PM Book Discussion Group (Jacobson home)	14 Holy Cross Day 7:00 PM Finance Committee (CO)	15	16 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)	17	18
19 Pentecost 17 <i>Welcome Back Sunday</i> 9:30 AM Adult Forum resumes 12:15 PM Healing Prayer Gathering (FR)	20	21 Saint Matthew 7:00 PM Vestry (UR)	22	23 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)	24	25
26 St. Michael and All Angels	27 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl Group (YL) 7:00 PM Prayer Shawl Group (YL)	28	29	30 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (MR)		

Locations:
 CO: Church Office
 CR: Choir Room
 MR: Music Room
 FR: Fireside Room
 PH: Parish Hall
 UR: Upper Room
 YL: Youth Lounge
 S: Sanctuary

Visiting Priests

As the rector search progresses, we will have several clergy of the diocese with us at St. Michael and All Angels on Sunday mornings.

Please take a few moments to meet those who will be with us in the coming weeks.



Patricia O'Reilly

The Reverend Pat O'Reilly began serving as the Director of the Ecumenical Council of Pasadena Area Churches, a program providing services for low income and homeless people in the Pasadena area, in November of 2006. She has been an Episcopal priest for 27 years, and has worked in a variety of settings particularly among the poor and low income. She has served as the School Chaplain at St. Matthew's in Pacific Palisades, the Director of Episcopal Chaplaincy of Los Angeles County Facilities (hospitals and jails), Associate at St. Stephen's in Hollywood and in several other church positions. Before coming to ECPAC Pat worked as the Interim Pastor at Messiah Lutheran Church on Orange Grove Boulevard.

The Reverend Patricia O'Reilly will be at St. Michael's during the month of September.



Warren Nyback

A third generation Californian, the Reverend Canon Warren Nyback was born in East Los Angeles and grew up in Indio. He received his Bachelor's in History at USC in 1961, and attended the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, graduating in 1964. In the late 1990s he took several courses in Gerontology at Cal State Long Beach, working towards, but not completing, a certificate in Gerontology.

On March 11 of this year, he celebrated 45 years as a priest in the Episcopal Church. In that time, he has served in three congregations: 2½ years as a Curate at St. Luke's, Long Beach, 5½ years as Rector, Headmaster and Chair of St. Timothy's Manor Corporation (provides low cost housing for senior citizens) at St. Timothy's, Compton, and 29 years as Rector and Headmaster at St. Paul's, Pomona. He retired in 2001, and, since then, has been the Bishop's Chaplain to Retired Clergy, Widows, and Clergy Survivors in the Diocese of Los Angeles. While no longer paid for that half time job, he continues in that position on a volunteer basis.

The Reverend Canon Warren Nyback will be at St. Michael's during the month of October.



Mark Shier

The Reverend Canon Mark Shier is the rector emeritus of Saint Andrew's Parish, Fullerton. He retired last year after 32 years as their rector. His particular interests are science (especially science and religion), psychology and spirituality, and casting traditional theological truths into modern idiom. His hobbies are reading, classical music, gardening, and four dogs (Emily and Branwen, miniature dachshunds; Foxy, a welsh corgi; and Morgan, a mutt).

He was born on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, in 1944, grew up in the Air Force, attended Seattle University, served in the Army in Vietnam, went to graduate school at Cal Berkeley, UCLA, Bloy Episcopal School of Theology, and the School of Theology at Claremont. He describes himself as a theological conservative and a social liberal—yes, the two really can go together. His latest adventure is a Celtic spirituality pilgrimage to England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. He very much enjoys worshipping with St. Michael's. It's a great parish!

The Reverend Canon Mark Shier will be at St. Michael's during the month of November.

Farewell Fiesta in Honor of Henry & Treadwell Atkins

June 13, 2010



Donors to the Carpeting Fund

Thanks to the generosity of these donors, the new flooring in the sanctuary is a reality.

Johan Agerbeek
 William & Dorinda Angelucci
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 Marjorie Carhart
 Ed & Diane Collins
 David Connors & Alex Morales
 Matthew Davidson & Sarah Lentz
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 Donald DeRose & Peter Juzwiak
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October 2010 MIKE Deadline

Please send copy and/or pictures via e-mail to administrator@stmikessc.org by Tuesday, September 21. If you don't have a computer, bring your articles to the Parish Office by that time.

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David Connors, Junior Warden

Margie Mullen, Treasurer

Alex Morales, Clerk

Rodney Dickson

Preston Fray

Gail Green

Betsy Hailey

Leonard Harman

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Vision Statement

We are a welcoming and evolving community of conscience engaged in the renewal of our faith by embracing diversity and encouraging growth through prayer, scholarship, social action, and artistic endeavor.

Our Mission Priority

Our mission priority is to focus on the United Nations' First Millennium Goal: To eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.