All through the Old and New Testaments, Israel, the people of God, is described as a vineyard planted and tended by God... and beyond whose boundaries of law and custom is a people who are not God’s chosen. What is left unsaid, because accepted by all, is that you can go beyond the boundaries and thereby cease to be a part of Israel. Motives, feelings, and degree of sincerity do not change the fact of having crossed the border. It is important that the border be well defined: that those who approach it can see the orderliness of the tended vineyard on the one side and the randomness of thicket, bramble, brier, and rocks beyond.

In ancient times, God’s people and God’s church were one thing. Notions of secular and sacred were unknown. There was no separation of church and state. This is not to deny that we can certainly see friction and confrontation between God’s prophets and the various kings of Judah and Israel. At issue, however, was fidelity to (and corruption of) God’s law as it affected every aspect of the people’s life. No one believed in the non-existence of God or that His claim was not pervasive. The prophets regaled the various kings not only about religious and liturgical matters, but brought God’s moral and ethical demands to bear on the practice of law, medicine, diplomacy, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and every other endeavor of His people, commercial, social, and professional.

But already in the Old Testament we can see a material worldview gradually replacing the spiritual. And the parable Our Lord Jesus tells shows that conflict. God, like the owner of the vineyard, is out of sight. And from that fact, and from the reliance we place upon our physical senses, it is easy to conclude that if God is out of sight He is also out of existence. And if God does not exist, human beings do not have any rival for mastery of the universe.

Against this prevailing mind-set, Our Lord Jesus constantly spoke of a superseding spiritual reality that shelters and supports this lesser world of matter and stuff. And in the parable Jesus shows what happens when the little world of materialism fails to take into consideration the larger reality. It will believe itself to be autonomous and dominant when in fact it is only a part of a larger creative foundation upon which it is dependent for its very existence.

All of this begins to sound very modern. Jesus is describing a world in which the higher authority of God has become remote or theoretical, a place where God is understood as merely symbolic, like the American flag or apple pie, rather than a truly living being with Whom we must contend and to Whom we must account. The secular world sees the Church as a mere set of vested interests attached to a past, resistant of progressive change, and with no claim on any sphere of life beyond the private aspirations of her own.
adherents. When the Church weighs in on any of the affairs of society- politics, commercial activity, statecraft, politics, education- she is seen as meddling beyond her competence as defined by the new thinking. Because God is no longer seen as a being but a thing, the Church is seen as an institution much like any other, and perceived by her actions and reactions to be using her authority to suppress people and keep them back from the new age, however this may be defined by the people in secular power.

Christ’s parable shows the final insanity of this drift- when society, refusing to comply with the demands of God, attempts to kill Him through His Son. Killing God is seen as progress. And all of a sudden, what sounded so contemporary and modern is revealed as being an old story. When Caiaphas counseled that it was expedient for one man to die than for the entire nation to suffer, he was simply reworking the primitive impulse to gain another’s power by killing him. That is something any caveman or cannibal would understand. The only difference is that the thoroughly modern Caiaphas re-packed his atavism in the guise of “sound political reasoning.”

The parable Our Lord tells us is therefore of greatest importance. The disciples had been led to this point when the whole drama of human history could now be put before them, even though in veiled form. In the Garden of Eden man and woman are exiled because of their disobedience.

In Christ’s parable, it is God’s exile that is attempted by His creature. God’s Own Son is killed, but not before it is established that He is “the beloved Son” and whose credentials are therefore from the Father. It was to help the would-be followers of Christ to reach this conviction that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants was told.

Those followers needed also to be told about the Resurrection. And this is given in the parable in the form of a proverb, a verse of Psalm 118 actually. It tells of a stone, which is rejected by the builders and yet in the end is set in the place of honor. The teaching of the Lord, summing up the whole drama of man’s relationship with his Creator, tells us that as the headstone of the corner Christ will reign over the world in glory. And those who oppose Him shall be scattered as dust.

Father Bradford

*This is a sermon preached on October 2, 2005.*

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**SHORT NOTES**

Many thanks to Father James O’Driscoll and Father Jürgen Liias for being our celebrant and preacher on the two last Sundays in October. Their kindness and pastoral care of us is much appreciated.

Thanks also to Steve Cavanaugh and Eva Murphy for hosting the reception following our St Michael’s Day Mass on September 29th. Many of the worshippers who joined us for our anniversary celebration enjoyed the opportunity to greet one another after Mass.

So far we have no takers for Adult Inquirers’/Confirmation Classes this fall. Meeting times are arranged with the chaplain.

There is Anglican Use Mass every Saturday at the Marian Altar in Saint Theresa’s Church, West Roxbury. Mass time is 8:00am.

Advent Sunday is November 29th. We use Lectionary Year C for Sundays, and the gospel readings are taken primarily from St Luke. Now is the time to obtain your devotional reading, calendars, and candles.

If you have not already done so please return your filled-in pledge card indicating the amount of financial support you intend to provide the parish for its programs in the next year. Your support and generosity are much appreciated.

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**THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY**

It is a great privilege to be here today on the same platform as one of the heroes of the pro-family movement in Massachusetts—Brian Camenker. It is also a privilege to be here with retired Justice Joe Nolan, the only jurist on the Supreme Judicial Court to defend the Constitution and religious freedom in Boston’s Saint Patrick’s Day Parade case, whose sole dissent was vindicated by a unanimous 9 to 0 decision by the United States Supreme Court.

Susan Long — who has thrown her heart and soul into many good causes for many years — asked me to speak to you today on the necessity of including social issues, which is
to say moral issues, in any populist and conservative movement for the reform of our country. I am delighted to do so. To those of you who believe in constitutional government, limited government, free enterprise, fiscal responsibility, personal liberty, and economic freedom, we in the pro-life and pro-family movements support you, and we hope and pray and work and vote for your success.

We ask you, in turn, to support us in building a culture of life, and in opposing such threats to life as abortion, abortifacient contraception and embryonic stem cell research. We ask you to join with us in defending marriage as the indissoluble union of one man and one woman, in preserving a moral order founded on natural law, and in protecting parental rights and parental choice in education.

Obviously, there is some convergence among our issues. One of the reasons we have abortion in America, same gender marriage in Massachusetts, and forced busing in Boston, is the decline of constitutional government in this nation and in this state. We live under an unelected and unaccountable judicial oligarchy, where judges have ceased to be jurists and now imagine themselves to be our rulers, and who impose their own preferences under the guise of interpreting the law — men and women who violate their oath, abuse their office, make a mockery of the separation of powers, and usurp the right of the people and their elected representatives to govern.

I have not come here today however, to ask you to support us based on this convergence, or on the necessity to defeat a common foe, or even for the sake of our own principles. I ask you who believe in limited government and personal liberty and economic freedom to support us for the sake of your own principles. The Founding Father who named this place Fort Independence in 1799, President John Adams said “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” The general who liberated this place on March 17th — Saint Patrick’s Day — 1776, George
Washington, wrote in his Farewell Address as president, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports....And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion....reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.”

For those of you who believe in limited government and personal freedom, you must remember that the two most effective and enduring barriers to the expansion of state power, and the two most vigorous and vital and implacable foes of government aggression are the church and the family. Why is it that Marxism-Leninism, which is to say Communism, which professes the need to restructure the economic order of society begins by attacking these two institutions? It is because Marxists understand that the church and the family are where the greatest resistance to tyranny will be found.

C.J. Doyle

The excerpt is from a very fine address by the executive director of The Catholic Action League, delivered on August 22, 2010. For more information www.catholicActionLeague.org

SOULS IN PURGATORY

Spiritualism is a most dangerous form of dabbling with the occult. It is always gravely wrong to be in any way involved. It is perhaps understandable that some people who have been bereaved might clutch at any straw in the hope of finding some sort of relief from the pain of losing a loved one. The silence of the grave can challenge the strongest faith. Indeed without the hope of being reunited one day, in the Communion of Saints in the life of the world to come, bereavement would be an inconsolable agony. We need to take comfort in what our faith teaches. For those who have died in God’s friendship, nothing is ever lost. By God’s grace, and through His mercy, we do not say an eternal adieu to our departed loved ones, but only au revoir. Once they have died any attempt to conjure up their spirits is always very, very wrong, and of course runs the terrible risk of provoking diabolic trickery. The Church does not say that such conjurations are actually impossible (remember the episode of Saul and the witch of Endor) but we are clearly taught that it is now always sinful. The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God. We must leave them there, where they belong: under the mercy.

And yet we are not without some sort of contact with the departed, or rather, not contact, but union. We believe that all who are in Christ are mystically united in and through Him, whether they are still in this world in the Church militant, or in Purgatory, the Church expectant, or in heaven, the Church triumphant.
All three realms of the Church are united in a real though invisible communion which is so much deeper than anything that could be achieved by the sordid trumperies of an unscrupulous necromancer. All who abide in Christ are united with each other by the shared bond of His own divine charity. To be in a state of grace and therefore spiritually united to Christ is to remain in a communion of charity with all the saints and all the faithful departed. This hidden union between those who are in Christ is particularly real when we approach the Lord either by receiving Him in Holy Communion or resting in His Presence before the tabernacle. There is no place for superstition here. When we receive Christ in the Blessed Sacrament we do not in any sense receive the presence of those who have died. Yet in receiving Christ, we are more closely united with the Holy Souls and with all those who are in the more immediate presence of God in heaven. Those who have been bereaved should also remember that the Son of God loves our beloved dead much more than we ever did or could. This should comfort us. At a funeral Mass, and at any requiem Mass, we are giving the departed soul back to God. Where better to place it, than in the hands of its Creator and Saviour.

A departed soul is much better off in Purgatory than on earth, because in Purgatory they are so much nearer the Beatific Vision. Purgatory is the antechamber to heaven. Our pilgrimage through this world is our journey to that antechamber. The journey is bedeviled by temptation (always) and by sin (often). In Purgatory, temptation and sin are past for ever. In that antechamber there is a final and no doubt painful purgation, so that we may then be led, suitably scrubbed and detoxed, into the banquet, in the presence of the King. Who would not be grateful for such a thorough and final cleansing. The prayers of the Church militant here on earth and of the Church triumphant in heaven can assist our passage through the antechamber. For those who have died in God’s friendship, we should rejoice that they have gone one stage further on in their journey to bliss unending. To want to hold them back or somehow to call them back to this vale of tears would be selfishness on our part, however keenly we might feel the loss of their passing.

The most consoling act of charity we can perform for our departed family and friends is to offer Mass for them; consoling for us in that we are doing something very positive and efficacious to remedy our imperfect love for them during their life on earth, and consoling for them in that the Mass will hasten them to the glory which awaits them. Every Mass is always offered for all the living and all the dead. When we ask for Mass to be offered for one soul in particular, we are applying to that individual soul all the infinite merits of Calvary. Some have asked: if the merits of the sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of Calvary, are truly infinite, why is more than one such Mass ever necessary? Our own experience helps us to understand. Think how often we on earth go to Mass, and yet how slowly we advance along the path of salvation, even though we have the full exercise of our free will, and can if we wish acquire merit all day every day. For the souls in Purgatory, their use of free-will and the acquisition of merit are all things of the past. They need us to apply for their benefit the grace of as many Masses as possible. They can no longer exercise their own will in favour of their entry into paradise. So we do it for them.

While we are on earth we can always advance in virtue, if we so choose. In Purgatory there is no vice and no virtue, just a long, long queue of those being cleansed. They can no longer go to Calvary by attending Mass, so we take Calvary to them by offering the sacrifice of the altar on their behalf. And if it should be
that we offer Mass for a soul who
has already reached the further end
of the queue and has already been
taken through the door that leads
straight into paradise, we can be
confident that the infinite goodness
of God will redirect our prayers, and
the consequent graces, for the benefit
of those expectant souls who are still
most in need of His mercy.

The Provost

This article appeared in the November,
2010 (Volume 87, No. 1074) issue
of THE ORATORY MAGAZINE,
published by the Brompton (London)
Oratory.

THE UNITED
NATIONS AGENDA

Asunción, Paraguay, Feb 26,
2015, 12:00 pm (CNA/EWTN
News).

Archbishop Edmundo Valenzeula
of Asuncion, Paraguay is demanding
that U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki
Moon - who is visiting the country
this week - ensure that the United
Nations does not promote abortion,
euthanasia and “gay marriage” in
Paraguay.

In a statement posted on
Facebook Feb. 25 to mark Ban’s
arrival, Archbishop Valenzuela said
the Paraguayan people wished to
extend hospitality to the U.N. leader
but warned of concerns that the
U.N. is putting pressure on Paraguay
to accept things that violate the
country’s core values and beliefs.

“Mr. Ban Ki Moon, the secretary
general of the United Nations, is
visiting our country at the official
invitation of the government,”
Archbishop Valenzuela said. “We
welcome him and we offer him the
hospitality of our people. We hope
that Mr. Ban Ki Moon’s stay will be
cordial and lead to concrete results
that benefit Paraguayan families,
especially those most in need.”

However, he warned, “We
cannot deny our concern regarding
the pressures constantly exerted on
the Paraguayan state, which is free
and sovereign, by so-called “U.N.
experts,* many of whom adhere
to obscure ideologies that openly
contradict our human and Christian
values.”

These pressures are related to “very
sensitive issues such as the natural
makeup of the family, contraception,
abortion and the integral and total
protection of human life from
conception to natural death.”

“Faithful to its founding spirit,
the U.N. needs to respect the cultural
tradition of peoples, their core values
and their beliefs, and recognize
that the role of moral and spiritual
mentoring belongs to the family and
to religion,” the archbishop said.

He further stated, “The moral
strength of a nation is found in
its beliefs and values which, lived
in accord with a healthy integral
education that takes into account
all the dimensions of the person,
must not reject faith, which is a
fundamental dimension of the
psycho-social and spiritual structure
of the human being.”

“Unfortunately, various recom-
endations from the U.N. on
human rights for Paraguay and other
countries include supposedly new
rights such as those proclaimed by
radical groups that are dedicated
to promoting the legalization of
abortion, euthanasia, homosexual
and other kinds of unions, with the
possibility that these couples can
adopt children.

“The role of the Church, he
emphasized, is to be an advocate “for
children, especially for those with
some form of handicap and/or who
are still in their mother’s wombs and
run the serious risk of being thrown
out by society if the new canons of
the culture of death, promoted by
international agents at the global
level, are accepted, and which legalize
what is evil under the auspices of the
State.”

“The Church raises her voice
in the name of the families who
are still living in situations that are
structurally unjust and that must be
overcome with serious and sustained
public policies.”

“While we share some common
good objectives proposed by the
U.N., and as the Church we work in
subsidiary with the Paraguayan State
to achieve them, we are nonetheless
vigilant in safeguarding the human
and Christian values of our people,
so that development focuses on and
promotes a full and dignified life for
all the inhabitants of our homeland.”

This article appeared in the February
26, 2015 electronic service edition of
Catholic News Agency and is used with
permission.
SUFFERING FELLOW CHRISTIANS

Last month, I traveled to Baltimore for a wedding, staying at a rectory of a parish with a large population of immigrants from the Middle East. During one of the evenings, various parishioners stopped by for a visit, one of whom was a young man who just recently had arrived with his family from Syria.

This young man, only 13 years old, was already a confessor of the Christian Faith - a confessor is somebody who has suffered persecution and trials because of their Faith in the Lord Jesus. The young man, Majed, was being taunted by a group of people who repeatedly told him to denounce his Christian Faith or they would harm him. After refusing and enduring insults and even physical abuse, one of the men threw him into the street in front of a moving bus. Providentially, the bus driver (also a Christian), was able to stop the bus just in time to do no physical harm to Majed; we can be certain the emotional and psychological harm will be lasting.

Sadly, Majed was not the only one who had endured such treatment because of his Faith. I heard many stories that night from people who have lost homes, jobs, livelihoods, and who have even been physically harmed, or have lost loved ones, because of their Faith in the Lord.

It was such a powerful experience for me to meet these people who have been insulted and persecuted, dragged before judges and princes, and who have given up everything for the Name of Jesus. These were not priests or religious but lay men and women of various ages, states of life and professions, who would not deny their Faith and therefore had suffered greatly. What a witness and an example to all of us to believe and live more fervently our Faith in the Lord Jesus!

Much of the suffering of fellow Christians in the Middle East is unreported in the United States and, sadly, even major religious leaders have remained silent in face of such terror and horror. It is essential we remain steadfast in solidarity with these brothers and sisters in the Lord, especially when so many important voices remain silent about this tragedy (while speaking so passionately and at such length about matters that comparatively will be judged nearly valueless by history). If we do not support them, who will? And how should we do this most effectively?

First and foremost, we remain in unity with them through our participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the other sacraments, and also through prayer. In addition, we should strive for an ardent and true Faith, rejecting all that is contrary to the Gospel and making every effort to conform our lives, words, and actions to the commandments of the Lord (a struggle which, in itself will require a kind of martyrdom). Finally, perhaps we can make little penances and sacrifices, offering them up for those who are suffering so much for our common Faith in Christ and His Church. On behalf of the Christians of the Middle East, I urge us all to not forget what they have and will endure because they confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord.

Father Patrick Armano

This article appeared in the September 6, 2015 issue of the parish paper of Saint Athanasius Parish, Reading, Mass. Fr. Armano is parochial vicar.
St. Lawrence Church, 774 Boylston Street (Route 9).
Park in the church parking lot behind the Church, off of Reservoir Rd.
Directions by Car: From the North or South: Route 128 to Route 9. At signal for Reservoir Road, take right; Church parking lot is a short distance on left.
From Boston: From Stuart/Kneeland St., turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles. Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route-9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. Parking lot is on your right.
Directions by Public Transportation: From Kenmore Square station board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C-branch.