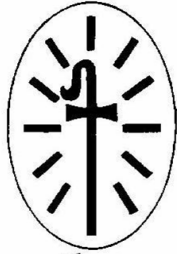


*Special Edition*



*Servus Servorum Dei*

# THE CHANT

The Church of Saint Gregory the Great

*"For the love of it, I do not spare myself from preaching it."*

-Saint Gregory the Great

## Until Christ be formed...

"Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

-John 18:37

"You know where he is, because you know where truth tastes sweet."

-Saint Augustine, *Confessions* 4.12.18

"I exhort you in all things, honoured brother, to attend obediently to what is written by the most blessed Pope of the Roman city; for St. Peter, who lives and reigns in his own see, will help those who seek the truth."

-Saint Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, *Letter 25 (To Eutyches)*

"The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'."

-Revelation 22:17

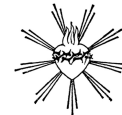
Dear Brothers and Sisters:

**Every Sunday**, just before our first Mass of the day, I close the door to my office to recite a prayer I have kept close to my heart for some time now. I recite the *Act of Love* of the Cure d'Ars, Saint John Vianney. He is the patron saint of parish priests, and I have held him in devotion and prayer ever since I spent a week in Ars prior to my ordination to the transitional diaconate. I prayed before his body, and I absorbed in that week, I believe, something of that saint's love for Jesus. His was a simple devotion but constant; and ever since then, I have wanted to love like him and to be a priest like him. I have not achieved his sort of love, nor have I ever been a priest like him. Thus, often, my prayers and my tears have run together.

Yet the words of this remarkable prayer still shine like gold underneath the grime of my sin and failure. "I love you, O my God," it reads. "My only desire is to love you, until the last breath of my life." The prayer goes on: "O my God, if my tongue cannot say at all times that I love you, at least I want my heart to repeat it to you as many times as I breathe." This prayer has been the charter of my priesthood and ministry. Often I have been convicted by this prayer. Nonetheless, always, I

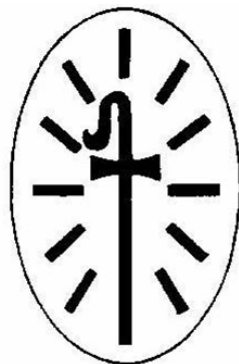
have touched Jesus with this prayer, and by it I have felt his mercy and his love.

I share this with you because I want to give you some idea of the simplicity and the peace I have now in my heart. Like Peter, I want to share with you the reason for the hope that is in me with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Also, I owe you some explanation for my decision to resign as Rector of Saint Gregory's so that Alli and I may be received into the Catholic Church. Please allow me to give witness.



**During my time at Saint Gregory's**, I have tried to keep our Parish focused solely on Jesus. I tried to do this, I believe, by leading worship that praised God and not ourselves, by teaching and preaching (as best I knew how) an unfettered Gospel, and by trying to form a community shaped by daily prayer. Our Parish is not perfect, but I do believe that I tried my best to get ourselves to inch our way toward a more serious and liberating life of discipleship.

My thought was to focus on Jesus because only he can save. In times as chaotic and polarizing as these, communities, parishes, and even dioceses can become ideological enclaves for the like-minded, hardened havens for those who share similar likes and dislikes. It is easy to end up loving the wrong thing. Communities can gather around goods merely of their own choosing rather than around the Good itself, which is God. I tried to steer our Parish away from identifying itself as a TEC parish or as an ACNA parish. I tried to keep our Parish from identifying itself solely by one or a few issues, be it women's ordination, sexual responsibility, or something else. Of course, I have been clear in my leadership about where I stand and where I intended to lead us (I struggled only to adhere to the Catholic faith of Jesus), but at the same time I have struggled greatly to keep us from being anything other than followers of Jesus Christ. We must always identify



*Servus Servorum Dei*

ourselves as disciples of Jesus and beware of the subtle shift that happens when sometimes we identify ourselves by our issues. I have always seen this as a great danger, and I hope I have served you faithfully in serving Jesus first.

Also, my hope for Christian unity is well known. Ever since I was young man, this has been my hope. It just sort of arrived in my heart, and I have never been able to let it go. For those of you who have read what I have written or attended the classes I have taught, it is clear where I stand theologically. Praying and working for Christian unity has been a fundamental part of my relationship with Jesus. A plain reading of the Gospels is enough to show us what is wrong with Christian division and denominationalism. Jesus quite simply prayed that we should “one,” and this is what we should be (John 17:21). I love Jesus, and I love what he said.

It is for the sake of unity in Christ that I voted with our Diocese to leave the Episcopal Church. Sexual irresponsibility is *not* the issue at stake in the Episcopal Church.

It is a symptom. The fundamental issue is a simple christological betrayal: denominational leaders and even the Presiding Bishop refused to speak clearly on the unique mediation of Jesus. In fact, they have spoken against the unique nature of Jesus Christ. From the Presiding Bishop’s “awfully small box” comment to *Time* (10 July 2006) to Gene Robinson’s statement that “While I believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, I don’t believe he is the sole revelation of God’s self to the world” (*In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 16), significant leaders within the Episcopal Church have failed to confess the Christian faith clearly. It’s for this reason I led our Parish out of the Episcopal Church, and I still feel that this was the right thing to do. I did this because the Episcopal Church, in my mind, had opted for a lesser unity based on human beings, on principles embodied in the Millennium Development Goals and in the Presiding Bishop’s concept of “Shalom.” Noble as these notions are, they rest on a human-made premise and not on Jesus. This is the great struggle for the soul of the Episcopal Church that is still being fought. Thus, I pray for everyone in the Episcopal Church and especially for those who remain faithful to Jesus—and there are many good Christians still within the Episcopal Church. I pray that God may continue to strengthen their witness.

***A plain reading of the Gospels is enough to show us what is wrong with Christian division and denominationalism. Jesus quite simply prayed that we should “one,” and this is what we should be (John 17:21). I love Jesus, and I love what he said.***



But, of course, as many of you know, leaving the Episcopal Church was only the beginning. Within weeks of the break, plans were revealed for a new North American province now constituted as the Anglican Church in North America. I had no idea things would move this fast, and in this past year I have made my concerns for this new province clear to you. I have raised concerns over the rush in which all this has been done. I raised concerns over the constitution of this new province: how it fails to address the first principles of faith and order. I have raised concerns over the so-called “local option” principle so evident in ACNA’s constitution. In brief, I have expressed my concern that ACNA is based on a highly fragile and problematic ecclesiology (I even hesitate to say that ACNA has an ecclesiology at all). There is a great deal of spirit in the rhetoric of praise for this new entity, but I cannot endorse it. I believe it is fatally and fundamentally flawed.



***To explain myself here***, please allow me to rehearse what I wrote to you some time back about the fundamental error at work in Anglicanism and especially in ACNA:

*“What you see here is the fundamental error of Anglicanism. Briefly, let me explain: When the Church of England broke with Rome in the sixteenth century, the Church of England still claimed to be a part of the “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” We made this claim while at the same time we broke the objective and organic unity of the Church as it had been expressed in the West for fifteen hundred years. In doing so, the Church of England, and all later Anglicanism, in a sense, had to sentimentalize what she meant when she spoke of the “Catholic Church.” Anglicans could no longer point to an actual entity, sometimes sullied in this earthly vale of tears as the Church can often be; rather, Anglicans now had to point to an idea of the Church. Ever since Anglicans broke from the visible Church, we have been haunted by various ideas of the Church, never content with the reality of the Church in all her glory or her gruesomeness. And these ideas of the Church are ever at war. Once we had a “High Church” idea at war with a “Low Church” idea, or an “Evangelical” idea at war with a “Tractarian” idea. Now we have the idea espoused by the Episcopal Church and the idea espoused by this new province.*

*And, like our forbears before us, we are blessing our indiscipline with ever new structures only to be destroyed again in a few years when the idea fades. Later generations will also destroy the works of their fathers, and they too will think it an act of God. This is the divisive tendency of all Protestantism and indeed of our beloved Anglicanism. Before elected Pope, Benedict XVI often wrote about Anglicans and Lutherans, hoping one day to bring us all together. Of Anglicanism he wrote:*

*‘There seems to be nothing to protect us from the conclusion that Anglicanism as it now exists is founded on an incoherent doctrine of the Church; and its attempts to resolve or conceal this gross internal antinomy has repeatedly led it into a series of chronic conflicts from which it barely escapes with any integrity.’ (England and Germany, p. 293)*

*This is absolutely right, and we are experiencing our chaos now because of this lack of understanding of what the Church is. This tendency will only continue. Ronald Knox, son of an Anglican bishop and convert to the Catholic Church, in 1927 said this of the Anglicanism in which he was raised:*

*‘Appraise the tendency as you will; welcome or regret its influence; but only disingenuity can deny that the tendency is there, and is apparently constant. You do not believe what your grandfathers believed, and have no reason to hope that your grandsons will believe what you do.’ (The Belief of Catholics, p. 6)*

*Chilling indeed. But this is the genetic tragedy of Anglicanism. This is why Newman finally cried out, “Be my soul with the saints!” He was tired of an idea of the Church, and he was tired of fighting for an idea of the Church. He wanted simply to belong. He wanted to be saved by the body of Christ. He didn’t want to save it himself.*

*So where does this leave us? We might be tempted by a sort of lazy or cowardly pragmatics. We may say, “The Church has always been like this.” Or, we might say, “Well, nothing will change here.” We might also say, “As long as it doesn’t bother me.” I must confess that I have found solace in all of these statements. As your priest, I have tried my best to keep this fight away from the family of Saint Gregory’s, and I will do my best to keep you from being harassed too much. But the fight is coming to us, and I will stand and*

*speak. Pray that I have strength, for I am on a course that will be difficult. I need your prayers and support. This will not be easy. But I am burdened with a burden I have never felt before.”*

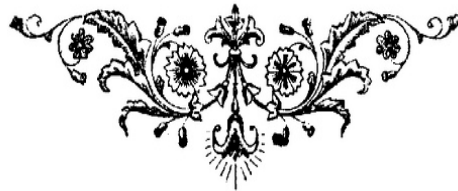
As Anglicans, we are chasing after an idea of the Church. The analogy that works best for me is to think of the Church as a family. If I didn’t like the way my parents ran my family, I certainly could complain. Maybe my complaint is justified. Maybe it isn’t. Whatever the issue, though, if I left my family, rented an apartment in another city and called myself the Whitfield family and if I said I was genuinely the Whitfield family because I ran my breakaway group the way the family was run in the early years of the undivided Whitfield family, would I really be the genuine Whitfield family? Of course not. The aunts, uncles, and cousins

(the saints) would still visit the old Whitfield family. If I broke away from my parents, my newly constructed family would at best be a virtuous charade. What would be best for me to do would be to return to the real Whitfield family, not to persist in chasing after some idea of what the Whitfield family should be. But this is exactly the problem of Anglicanism as it dissolves among the competing ideas of what the Church should be. We are trying to realize an idea of the Church while all along the Church just simply ex-

ists. She is the living body of Christ that has existed since the beginning. The Church has never been an idea that must then be actualized by people. The Church is the body of Jesus and also his bride. The Church is a living organism that is enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Rick Warren spoke of ACNA as a “new communion for a new reformation.” This is a strange way of seeing things. Last summer I asked us to see things in this way:

*“Pose to your spiritual understanding a few key questions: What is the Church? What is her nature? Why did Jesus found his Church on Peter? Why was Peter given the task of “strengthening the brethren” (Luke 22:32)? Where is Peter? Where is the Church that is rock? Is this smattering of canons and aggregation of the disagreeable and loosely-bound the Church? Is this new province rock-like? Jesus said his Church would be rock-like (Matthew 16:18-19). Paul said the Church was the pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). We are Saint Gregory’s, the family of God in this place. We need to be on rock. The rock is no idea. It is a real thing.”*

**Anglicanism is not an end in itself. It is not a denomination. By its very nature, it must seek the reunion of the Church. An Anglicanism passed off as ecclesially self-sufficient is distorted and dangerous, an idolatrous shrine.**



“Where is Peter?” That was my question then, and I do believe that Peter has just spoken. On 20 October, the Vatican announced the Apostolic Constitution, *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. In short, this Constitution paves the way for a real and visible restoration of Anglican Christians to the Church of Jesus Christ founded on Peter and his successors as signified by the keys (Matthew 16:19). Reunion with Catholic Church has been my stated goal from the beginning. It has been the express goal of the very best of Anglicanism as stated in various gatherings of the Lambeth Conference and in the ARCIC meetings of recent decades. Anglicanism is not an end in itself. It is not a denomination. By its very nature, it must seek the reunion of the Church. An Anglicanism passed off as ecclesially self-sufficient is distorted and dangerous, an idolatrous shrine. Anglicans cannot pretend to be Catholic and remain in a state of hardened schism.

And this is just what we’ve seen. Within hours of the Vatican’s announcement, Anglican leaders (sadly and strangely mostly Americans) pushed play on the same tired, antiquated, bankrupt, unreflective, and rehearsed positions against the Catholic Church. Anti-Catholic scarecrows were again let loose, misinformation was spread, and discernment was aborted by the immediate rehearsal of our rather tedious and idiosyncratic theological prejudices. Again, as Anglicans we chase after an idea of the Church at the very moment the living Church opens her arms toward us. What I found devastating was the swift and immediate refusal even to be open to a dialogue of conversion. The Catholic Church did something historic, and we simply offered up the same tired objections. We didn’t even let the sun set before we turned down history. Also, I find it more and more difficult to believe that we are Catholic in any sense of the word. How can we be Catholic when only we believe ourselves to be so? We cannot just call ourselves Catholic. We appeal to the historic church of the “first centuries” in order to justify our claim of being Catholic. However, this is a gravely flawed way of thinking as Newman realized. Besides our historical investigation being less than serious, inaccurate, and indeed highly subjective and self-serving, who said that the first five centuries of the Church’s history provide the criterion for what is and is not Catholic? Jesus said he would be with us *always*, “to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:20). He didn’t say, “I will be with you up until 451, and then you will have to rely on historical investigation.” No! Again, we see how Anglicans

can’t help but play off an idea of the Church against the living Church herself. As Anglicans, in order to identify ourselves and claim any sort of legitimacy, we have to unravel a highly complicated and uncertain version of history and theology that grows more and more absurd as we break apart. Each Anglican body can justify itself by some odd historical formula or theory while at the same time rejecting the simple theology of the Church that was founded by Jesus on Peter and his successors. I find it hard to accept such peculiar and self-idolizing theories, especially as they become more fantastic and ridiculous amid our humiliating divisions. This thinking is genuinely schismatic.



*In my few years with you I have grown to love you like my own family. Being your priest has never been a job for me. I cannot express the joy your faces and your hearts have given me.*



*But what about Saint Gregory’s? When I think about you, and about how my leaving may hurt you, I am shot through with the most excruciating pain. In my few years with you I have grown to love you like my own family. Being your priest has never been a job for me. I cannot express the joy your faces and your hearts have given me. This may be painful for you, but trust that deciding to leave you has been one of the most painful decisions of my life.*

But what else can I do? My hope, honestly, was to lead you home to the Catholic Church. I believe the new Apostolic Constitution would have provided a way for us to reunite with the largest body of Christians in the world in such a way that preserved the best of our heritage. Besides the fact that I believe that the Holy Spirit is directly inviting us to return to the Church founded on Peter by Jesus himself, I also saw our crisis and destiny in terms of survival. Quite simply: if we were to return to the Episcopal Church, we would be returning to an entity uncertain about the very basics of the Christian creed. This would slowly kill Saint Gregory’s as an actual parish church. Such is the course for countless dying parishes already. If, on the other hand, we were to pursue ACNA, this too, in my mind, would court a slow, pathetic, and tragic death for Saint Gregory’s. We would assign ourselves to an entity that refused to deal with first principles, refused to acknowledge its own sexual irresponsibility, and which partially identified itself around a rather thinly-veiled homophobia. Thus, from a sheer survival perspective, joining the Catholic Church under the Apostolic Constitution or the Pastoral Provi-

sion appears to me to be the only hope for Saint Gregory's at all. I pray Saint Gregory's may yet realize this.

Of course, not everyone agrees. Very few have instantaneously refused even to consider it. These people have continued to cling to misunderstanding, fear, and prejudice. Likely, they believe the rhetoric of ACNA. I can only say that I wonder at their certainty and confidence especially when mixed with such misunderstanding. Some are interested but cautious, still burdened by a cultural and generational prejudice that is hard to heal. Some prize the building over anything else. They are attached to the campus of St. Gregory's for perhaps good and sentimental reasons. Nonetheless, all I can say about that is this: *You love the wrong thing.* Others (and this is an unfolding and beautiful story) have embraced the Catholic faith in its fullness and are making the move toward the Catholic Church. The majority, though, I suspect are just indifferent. Most, I should think, wonder why I get so worked up. They don't see the significance one way or the other about much of anything. These are they that break my heart the most. My hope was that we would follow the Lord together. I will always wonder if I could have brought Saint Gregory's into the Church that lives. Nonetheless, we don't need a building to be the Church, and I hope you see that in my action.

Nonetheless, I would have felt called to pursue you to my dying day, trying to shepherd you into the Church that lives. However, I came up against a moral dilemma. First, I have discovered that my Bishop, with integrity, holds a thoroughly Protestant position. Not only that, he refuses to allow parishes to discern their own path. His position, stated just recently to our Parish, is a patchwork of non sequiturs and theological curiosities that is hard even to begin to understand. Bishops are rarely challenged, so the hazards of illusion are very great. In any case, I will not fight him. At my institution as Rector, I was charged with "working together" with my Bishop "in communion" with him. Thus, given such evident differences, I had a choice either to manipulate my Parish while being duplicitous before my Bishop, or to be clear, frank, and honest and to offer myself in witness. Bishop Iker is a good man. I have loved him since I was a boy. He is a man of integrity even though I think he is in error. I will

not fight him. I have a broken heart for my Bishop, but all I can do now is just go. I will always be grateful to him for his constant love and kindness toward me. Those people who excoriate and vilify Bishop Iker do not know him. He is an honorable man. He and his family have given themselves sacrificially to God's work and to this Diocese, and we are all indebted to him. I am also grateful for his leadership in shepherding his flock out of the Episcopal Church. That was the right thing to do, and I am still inspired by his ministry. Sadly, though, I think he is losing the greater destiny for the love of lesser things. I genuinely love the man, and this has meant for me real and searing pain as I have realized our differences. Nonetheless, I will always be thankful. I look forward to welcoming him as a brother around the Altar of the Church. Likewise, I hope those other good and faithful parishes in our Diocese will be given the genuine freedom to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. My leaving now in no way dissolves the bonds of love I have for my brother priests or for those lay brothers and sisters who seek the truth. I will pray for them at every Catholic Eucharist in which I partake, longing for the day when we will be there together.

*My journey has become very personal for me now. I must follow the truth that calls me forth.*



And as I will not fight our Bishop, I will not fight you either. I will not divide the Parish. All I can say is that I wanted to be your pastor until the day I died. I wanted to raise my children in this beautiful parish family. I don't want to leave you, but I have no choice. If I refused my conscience now, I fear that it would become harder and harder for me to hear God's voice in the future. I have come to see that my very soul is at stake. Augustine's words have come alive for me now: "There is no repose where you are seeking it. Search as you like, it is not where you are looking. You are seeking a happy life in the realm of death, and it will not be found there. How could life be happy, where there is no life at all?" (*Confessions* 4.12.18) My journey has become very personal for me now. I must follow the truth that calls me forth.

But, in a sense, I am not leaving you. In fact, I am drawing nearer to you. I don't expect all of you to accept this right now; but from a spiritual perspective, I am drawing closer to you by joining the Catholic Church. The Church is the body of Jesus, the community of re-

deemed humanity. And since Jesus is the Son of God, Christ, and Lord, to belong to the Church is to belong more perfectly to humanity. Thus, by entering the Church of Jesus founded on Peter, I make myself more available than ever to you as your brother. If what the Bible says about the Church is true, then every one of you is called to take the same step I am about to take. I step out into the unknown because I desire to show you the truth of it. Saint John Vianney once prayed for his people: "My God, here is all—but convert my parish...My God, I consent to suffer all that you may wish, for all my life...and the most bitter suffering, but convert them." Although my circumstances are different, my heart aches like his. I pray for your conversion. His patience awaits us. For some, this is hardly imaginable. For others, perhaps you can see it. As your pastor, let me say this: *If you are ready to take this step, I will help you.* I will not leave you. I still feel bound by my love for you. If you would like to explore God's call for you to take part in the movement of the Holy Spirit to heal the Church, I will be there for you. I will help you take that step. Please feel free to call me or e-mail me any time. I will do everything I can to care for you, but I must go on ahead of you now. Yet, I will continue to pray that we may all be one. My love for you remains, and I trust that we will one day be there together. I see the Church, and she is beautiful. Let us go there together. "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'" (Revelation 22:17).

*To the only God, immortal, invisible, be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus now and forever. Amen.*

In Christ,  
Fr. Joshua+



**Fr. Joshua and Alli may be  
reached at their home...**

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**ACT OF LOVE OF THE HOLY "CURÉ D'ARS"**

I love You, O my God.  
My only desire is to love You,  
until the last breath of my life.

I love You, O infinitely loveable God,  
and I prefer to die loving You,  
rather than to live for an instant without You.

I love You, O my God,  
and I desire only to go to Heaven,  
to have the happiness of loving You perfectly.

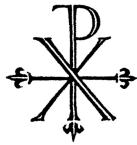
I love You, O my God,  
and my only fear is to go to Hell,  
because one will never have the sweet  
solace of loving You there.

O my God, if my tongue cannot say  
at all times that I love You,  
at least I want my heart to repeat it to You  
as many times as I breathe. Ah! Do me the grace  
to suffer while loving You,  
to love You while suffering,  
and, that when I die:  
I not only will love You,  
but experience it in my heart.

I beg You that: the closer I come to my final end,  
You will increase and perfect my love for You.

*Amen.*

**Below are a few resources for further discernment...**



***The Catechism of the Catholic Church***

***What Happened at Vatican II***

*by John W. O'Malley*

***The New Ecumenism***

*by Kenneth D. Whitehead*

***Catholicism***

*by Henri de Lubac*

***The Belief of Catholics***

*by Ronald Knox*

***Rome Sweet Home***

*by Scott Hahn*

***Peter in the New Testament***

*eds. Raymond Brown*

*Karl Donfried*

*John Reumann*

***The Early Papacy***

*by Adrian Fortescue*

***On Being Catholic***

*by Thomas Howard*

***The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism***

*by Louis Bouyer*

***Anti-Catholicism in America***

*by Mark S. Massa*

***What Catholics Really Believe-  
Setting the Record Straight***

*by Karl Keating*

**Online Resources...**

***The Vatican***

*www.vatican.va*

**The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth**

*www.fwdioc.org*

**The Anglican Use Society**

*www.anglicanuse.org*

**The Pastoral Provision of John Paul II**

*www.pastoralprovision.org*

**The United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops**

*www.usccb.org*

**The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology**

*www.salvationhistory.com*

**Prayer for the Unity of the Church**

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 818*

**O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

***What's Inside:***

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