



Crossings

Church of the Holy Cross ✠ Episcopal
875 Cotton Street, Shreveport, Louisiana
October 5, 2022

Services (until further notice)

Please see calendar.

The Vestry

David Richard, Senior Warden
Ginger Paul, Junior Warden
Becky Snodgrass, Secretary
Tommie Sue Brooks
Georgiana Gleason
Lyman McKellar
Marshall Middleton
Reid Raymond
Jackie Songy
Monty Walford, Treasurer
(non-vestry)

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Church of the Holy Cross
Shreveport

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Vampires, Zombies, and the Eucharist

Mike Flanagan's *Midnight Mass*, Netflix



In Mike Flanagan's Netflix horror series *Midnight Mass*, we're introduced to a reclamation of the horror genre as critique rather than the often cheap thrill of a mindless scare or cringe-inducing gore. In particular, *Midnight Mass* critiques the Church, and more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

I'll try not to spoil it too much, but chances are that if you like that sort of thing, you've already seen it. The show begins with preparations for the return of the town priest from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The pastor is in his eighties and has been the priest there for most of his life.

However, everyone is met that Sunday morning not by their affable old vicar, but by a new, young priest. Slowly, the priest is shown to be something of a miracle-worker, even to the extent of a paralyzed girl regaining her ability to walk, and an elderly woman with dementia regaining her mind and eventually her youthful beauty. But slowly the horror begins to unfold.

We learn that the new priest is actually the old priest, and that while he was in the Holy Land he encountered a vampire that bit him and reverted him to his younger self. The priest unwittingly became the vampire's acolyte, thinking that the monster was actually an angel. The vampire's magical blood made its way into the communion wine, which is why members of the church began to experience radical healing of their various illnesses and deficiencies.

There is even one scene, in which the monster is revealed to the parish. This fallen angel dons a chausible and processes to the front of the altar for the Easter vigil. The visual imagery of the wolf in sheep's clothing being lauded by the bumbling pastor as an angel of the Lord is a stunning allegory for the

Church's abuse scandals. But today I'm more interested in talking about how this show, and the horror genre in general, plays off of Christian themes, particularly the Eucharist.

We see in *Midnight Mass* a perversion of the Eucharist. It's not Christ's body and blood, freely given for the redemption of the world, that the people receive. It's the vampire's. The vampire freely gives his blood and it heals the flesh of those who drink it, but at the cost of their humanity. And rather than giving of himself that those who receive might have life and have it more abundantly, as Christ does, the vampire gives his blood in order to grow the ranks of the undead. The lambs are led to slaughter, not salvation, whatever else some of the characters would have them believe. And we see also in this and other vampire stories the difference between everlasting life in Christ and simply living forever via other means. One is the fullness of humanity in perfect communion with God. The other is a monstrosity.

We see similar ideas portrayed in other monster movies and literature. In much of the Western conception of the vampire, beginning with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the vampire is seen as a representation of sin, a cheap mimicry of the incarnation of Christ where rather than God robed in flesh, we find the devil and sin stealing the bodies of those they trap in their lies.

This representation of sin changes with time as our collective understanding of sin changes. In 1922's *Nosferatu*, the vampire is depicted as a hideous monster, something to be avoided, wholly undesirable, monstrous. In the 1992 film adaptation of *Dracula*, a debonair and handsome Gary Oldman seduces his victims with charm, wealth, and other attractive qualities. The movie *Dracula* does well to capture the alluring nature of sin as something that requires resistance and, unlike *Nosferatu*, is not something we instinctively avoid.

But as Western culture began to take less seriously the threat of sin to our humanity, our conception of the vampire changed even more. See Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, for instance, or the *True Blood* series on HBO that was filmed here in Shreveport. These and others present a more nuanced view, but ultimately demote the vampire from agent of sin to the level of cultural taboo.

In the *Twilight* series, the vampire is defanged into a teenage heartthrob whose only danger to the humans is due to a power struggle between warring vampire clans. Unlike *Dracula* and *Nosferatu*, the *Twilight* vampire does not make it clear that sin is something that corrupts humanity and distracts it from its true and ultimate redemption in Christ. A steady trope in the vampire myth, after all, is that the cross bears the power to repel them.

The vampires of *Dracula* and *Midnight Mass* feed on their victims, giving their blood only to make better foot-soldiers in their mission to satiate their hunger for human blood. This is in stark contradistinction to Christ, who gives his blood for the life of the world. They are undying because they are undead. The Children of God, on the other hand, receive the blood of Christ and step into the fullness of God's own life at God's own invitation.

The vampire and other monsters like the zombie show us again that it is God, not the devil, who has the best tunes. The zombie in particular shows this most devastatingly. George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* shows the zombie hoard gathered around a shopping mall, that modern mausoleum—at least, until only recently, as malls have begun to shutter their doors across the country.

The aimless wandering of the zombies to the mall is the result of the habits of their former lives. Whittled down to their basest desires, the zombies congregate at the place where they most often felt the satisfaction of their desire. And the humans who flee there for protection show us that the real zombies are the consumers who mindlessly gather that which is utterly useless,

***Nosferatu* (1922), *Dracula* (1992)**



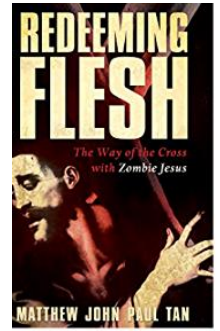
***Zombie, Dawn of the Dead* (1978)**



and who finally succumb to the zombie's curse themselves in what amounts to an outward and visible sign of their inward and spiritual deadness.

The zombie also shows us a parody of Christ and reveals to us a humanity that has lost its sense of transcendence and its vision of the future we've been promised by God. The zombie feeds on human flesh, not for its survival, but out of unfettered desire, and by doing so, it spreads its curse to those it bites. The desire for the consumption of all flesh therefore increases with each successive victim until the zombie curse consumes all flesh and obliterates humanity.

In contrast, Christ offers up his own flesh in the Lord's Supper and on the cross. He takes the bread, breaks it, and gives it to his disciples, not for his survival, but for ours. And by doing so, he spreads the grace of his life to those who consume his flesh. But just as a candle's flame is not diminished when it lights another wick, neither is Christ's fullness diminished as he shares himself with us. When we receive his body, we do not receive a piece of Christ until he is all gone, but the whole of Christ who is always present. It's not the case that one gets a leg, another an arm, but that in each piece of bread the fullness of him who died and rose again is fully present.



In his excitingly insightful book, *Redeeming Flesh: The Way of the Cross with Zombie Jesus*, Matthew Tan writes at length about the zombie trope and its parody of Christ. Tan does an excellent job of highlighting the desire for immortality and the fear of death that defines so much of the postmodern West as the result of an anxiety that has forgotten the promise of redemption. He notes in particular the drive to assume youthfulness and power at the expense of others as a vampiric manifestation of the desire for everlasting life, which lacks the transcendence of the God who first offered us abundant life in Christ.

Having forgotten the promise of our redemption, we look everywhere for the cure to death except for the one place where death has been defeated: the life of Christ—the cross and empty tomb. We go after fashion, cosmetics, plastic surgeries, money, science, medicine, technology, in our effort to *cheat* death by imitating youth rather than to the cross where we've met the one who can *defeat* death.

To put it in the language of the Bible: “For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ. . . .” Or more drastically, in the words of Christ: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and all kinds of filth.”

Matthew Tan writes:

Christ's redemption of flesh as a precondition of immortality comes not from our efforts to assume the condition of a god, but from God's work in assuming the condition of a slave . . . the redemption of flesh comes only when Christ assumes our condition of the zombie. Having assumed that condition, Christ then reorients the zombie by showing to it the true path to immortality, the true trajectory [of our humanity].

Horror movies, and especially vampires and zombies, really do have something to teach us about our own life in Christ. They often show us what the Church has long taught. We cannot save ourselves. And when we try, we often achieve the opposite. The monstrosity of the horror genre is often human beings stripped of their humanity in their own attempts to conquer death. But days like today remind us that we need not fear death, for the death of our savior has set us free.

Halloween is a time for scary things, a moment of the year where we stare down the fear of death and monsters and devils and hell, and we laugh in their faces. We laugh because we are Christians. We are followers of the risen one who has defeated death and mocked the devil. As St. Chrysostom said in his Easter homily, “Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it. He destroyed Hell when He descended into it. He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh.”

The powers of horror and fear exist only when we forget that weeping may last the night, but joy comes in the morning. That which seeks to do us harm, whether illness or age or evil, cannot succeed because the same God who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ has vowed to do the same for us. And whatever the ghouls and ghosties and long-legged beasts and things that go bump in the night might claim will be short-lived, for as John Donne wrote, “One short sleep past, we wake eternally. . . .”

So bring on the zombies and vampires and creatures of the night, Nietzsche's abyss or the fear of meaninglessness. The light of the Son by the power of his cross and empty tomb has claimed the victory, and it shines over all the cosmos. Indeed, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Fr. Garrett Boyte



Calendar for October and early November

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Saturdays | Evening Prayer, Rite II | 6:00 pm | Online |
| Sundays | Morning Prayer, Rite II | 9:00 am | Chapel |
| | Parish Choir rehearsal | 9:45 am | Nave |
| | Children's Sunday School | 10:30 am | Education Building |
| | Holy Eucharist, Rite II | 11:00 am | Nave |
| Mondays, Tuesdays | Evening Prayer, Rite II | 6:00 pm | Online |
| Wednesdays | Book Club | 10:30 am | Library |
| | Holy Eucharist, Rite II | Noon | Chapel |
| | Evening Prayer, Rite II | 6:00 pm | Nave and online |
| | Bible Study | 6:30 pm | Library |
| Thursdays, Fridays | Evening Prayer, Rite II | 6:00 pm | Online |
| Thursday, October 6 | Wedding of Fr. Garrett Boyte and Mr. Ryan Eubanks, reception following | 7:00 pm | Nave, Undercroft |
| Tuesday, October 18 | Vestry meeting | 6:00 pm | Library |
| Sunday October 30 | Oktoberfest | 12:15 pm | Undercroft |
| Monday, October 31 | Convocational Fall Triduum | 5:30 pm | Oakland Cemetery |
| Tuesday, November 1 | " " " | 5:30 pm | St. James' |
| Wednesday, November 2 | " " " | 5:30 pm | St. Paul's |
| Saturday, November 5 | Fall Festival | 10:00am-1:00 pm | Undercroft |

Stay tuned for news of the Hope House birthday party in November!

Prayer List

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Steve Abramson | Wes Gearhart | Mim McCoy | Cynthia Walker |
| Stella Rhea Bergman | John August Gianforte | Della McCranie | Louis Wallace |
| Ellen Dunlop Belote | Austin Gleason | Michael McKenzie | David Walsh |
| Mark Boydston | Richard Hadwin | Jesse Paul | Connie Wiggins |
| Nikki Brown | Sandra Hadwin | Kelly Rutz | Bill Wright |
| Mary Berth | Mike Hathaway | Brady Sessions | Mary Wright |
| Margaret Boudreaux | Zoe Hathaway | Mary Ann Shemwell | Sheryl Wright |
| Sara Lou Coyle | Ann-Marie Henderson | Wade Shemwell | The people of Ukraine |
| John Craig | Kay Hunnel | Linda Sirman and family | Survivors of gun violence |
| Drew Dodson Family | Elizabeth Ingram | Angela Smith | The Royal Family |
| Jean Dooley | Peggy Kirkland and family | Paul Smith | |
| Deanna Dyck | David Lewis | Catherine Spaht | |
| Floyd "Buzzy" Farrar | Richard Liles | Paul Spaht | |
| Maggie Fowle | Maureen Locke | Robert Todd | |

We pray for those who serve and are served by Martin Luther King Health Center and Pharmacy.

In the diocesan cycle of prayer, we pray for St. David's, Rayville, the Rev. Christie Fleming (Scott); for Redeemer, Ruston, the Rev. Frank Hughes; and for Holy Cross, Shreveport, the Rev. Garrett Boyte.

Lay Ministries

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: October 9, 2022

Lectors: Holly McIntyre, David Richard
Prayers of the People: Melissa Fowle
Eucharistic Ministers: Carolyn Mahlen, Ginger Paul
Acolyte: Steve Snodgrass
Ushers: Donna Neal, Becky Snodgrass
Altar Guild: Laura Wilkerson, Mike Wilkerson

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: October 16, 2022

Lectors: Becky Snodgrass, Steve Snodgrass
Prayers of the People: David Richard
Eucharistic Ministers: Herschel Richard, Lucie Thornton
Acolyte: Grady Jackson
Ushers: Laura Wilkerson, Mike Wilkerson
Altar Guild: Becky Snodgrass

Service Music

Celebration and Blessing of the Marriage of the Rev. Garrett Boyte and Mr. Ryan Eubanks Thursday, October 6, 2022, 7:00 pm

- Mass:** Mathias
Psalm 67: Anglican chant
Anthem: Greater love hath no man—J. Ireland
Hymns: Thaxted; 401 Leoni, vv. 1-4; 527 Ton-y-Botel; St. Helena; 624 Ewing; 437 Birmingham
Organ: Ceremonial March—Sumison; Berceuse—Vierne; Fanfare—Mathias; Sicilienne—von Paradis; Crown Imperial—Walton; Gymnopedie No. 1—Satie; Brother James' Air—Searle Wright

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: October 9, 2022

- Mass:** Rutter, Powell, and Berthier
Psalm 111: Response—Picardy; Plainsong, tone II.2
Anthem: Nun danket alle Gott—J. S. Bach
Hymns: 375 Du Lebensbrot, Herr Jesu Christ; 538 Dix; 415 Durham; 483 St. Magnus; 411 St. Thomas (Williams)
Organ: Berceuse, Op. 13, No. 19—L. Vierne; Magnificat Fugue in D minor—J. Pachelbel

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: October 16, 2022

- Mass:** Rutter, Powell, and Berthier
Psalm 121: Response—Munich; Plainsong, tone I.2
Anthem: Come O thou Traveler unknown—Traditional melody
Hymns: 709 Dundee; 678 St. Ethelwald; 337 Unde et memores; LEVAS 178 Sweet Hour; 530 Gott sei dank
Organ: Adagio in E—Frank Bridge; Magnificat Fugue in D minor—J. Pachelbel

New Service Music Settings By Ben Gessner, Organist and Choirmaster

One of the ways we highlight the changing liturgical seasons are shifts in service music. While we're not yet to Advent, the lengthy season after Pentecost easily lends itself to musical variety.

After the Collect for Purity, the Prayer Book calls for the Gloria, "some other song of praise," or the Trisagion or Kyrie on "other occasions" (read: penitential; BCP p. 356). While the Gloria became part of the Mass Ordinary, this rubric gives church musicians and clergy some freedom. We'll sing a setting of *Benedictus es, Domine*. This Apocryphal text is a Greek addition to Daniel 3. It is the first part of the prayer of the three young men in the furnace.¹ The hymn's liturgical use is rooted in the Daily Office. It entered the Episcopal Prayer Book in 1928, suggested



¹Cf. Daniel 3; Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews, vv. 29-34. The additions to Daniel are considered canon in Roman, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox communities. According to Amy-Jill Levine, their origins are debated, but the texts may date to the second or first century BCE (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Fourth Edition).

for Morning Prayer. Some students of the Prayer Book might also know that a latter part of the Song of the Three Jews is another Daily Office canticle, the *Benedicite* (vv. 35-65, on BCPpp. 88-90).

English composer John Rutter (b. 1945) was invited by the Episcopal Church to write this setting, #S-236, in 1983. Its repetition (matching the verse-refrain structure of the text) and jubilant, lilting rhythm make it a welcome addition to our repertoire.

The Sanctus (#S-129, a staple of the Episcopal canon) is by Robert Powell (b. 1932). It comes from his Mass in F, composed in 1975 for Christ Church, Greenville, SC. *N.B.* the [in]famous Gloria setting (#S-280) is also from the Mass in F.

Once again, the Prayer Book provides options at the Breaking of the Bread: “some other suitable anthem” may be sung “in place of, or in addition to” *Pascha nostrum* (BCP p. 364). Our new Fraction Anthem, “Eat this bread,” comes to us from the Community of Taizé, based on John 6:35. The Community is a Burgundian ecumenical lay group, known for their simple, contemplative settings. These musical selections can accommodate many different voicings and instrumentations. Refrains may be repeated indefinitely, with varied textures and moods; in performance, the music can become litany-like, creating more of an ethereal atmosphere rather than a structured piece. Jacques Berthier and Robert Batastini collaborated on the text and music, finishing the setting in one afternoon, October 1983.

FALL FESTIVAL

The Fall Festival will be held Saturday, November 5, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and we will need help the week before to set up. More information will be forthcoming about the need for baked goods and soup. Meanwhile, it isn't too early to gather up new or gently-used items to donate for the bazaar. They include:

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Jewelry | Table linen | Scarves | Nicknacks |
| China | Flatware | Yard art | ????? |
| Crystal | Pictures | Handcrafted items | |
| Books | Purses | Christmas decorations | |



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Mission Statement: *The Church of the Holy Cross, Shreveport, Louisiana, strives to be the presence of Jesus Christ in our community and beyond, through worship of Almighty God, open inquiry, sharing fellowship, valued diversity, genuine inclusiveness, and servant leadership—encouraging all to exercise God's gifts and calling as we share the Gospel of Hope in programs, to serve without regard for religious affiliation, race, or economic status.*



Hope House: There is an ongoing need for coffee, sugar, creamer, laundry detergent **pods**, disposable razors, and personal-size hygiene products (soap, shampoo, deodorant, etc.) Please take your donations to 762 Austen Place or to the church office. Thank you for your continued support.

Forward Day by Day for **October** and **November**, in both standard and large-print editions, is available in the Narthex and the Undercroft.

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Ph.D., D. D.
The Rt. Rev. Jacob Owensby, Ph.D., D. D.
The Rev. J. Garrett Boyte, M.Div.
The Rev. Mary Richard
The Rev. Kenneth W. Paul
The Rev. Donald D. Heacock
Mr. Ben Gessner
Mrs. Laurie Connell
Mr. Charles Alford
Mr. Brian Jackson

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IV Bishop of Western Louisiana
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Organist/Choirmaster
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