

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## I. Pride



A. Yesterday, I spent the day at the Ventura County Pride Festival at a booth representing the Episcopal Churches of our area.

1. You could certainly say that the church at a Pride Festival is very unusual territory.

2. Many people were surprised to see a church booth there – let alone two – as the Lutherans were next door.

3. And many people also thanked us for being there – and said they were glad to know there were churches that were welcoming and cared.

4. It reminded me of a couple of years ago when I was holding down the booth on my own when this huge guy approached – covered in tattoos – and a sleeveless shirt, with a scowl on his face.

- I took one look at him and said, “Oh, oh, I’m in for it now.”

- He walked up to the booth – looked at me – and thanked us for being there and said how glad he was that there were churches who cared.

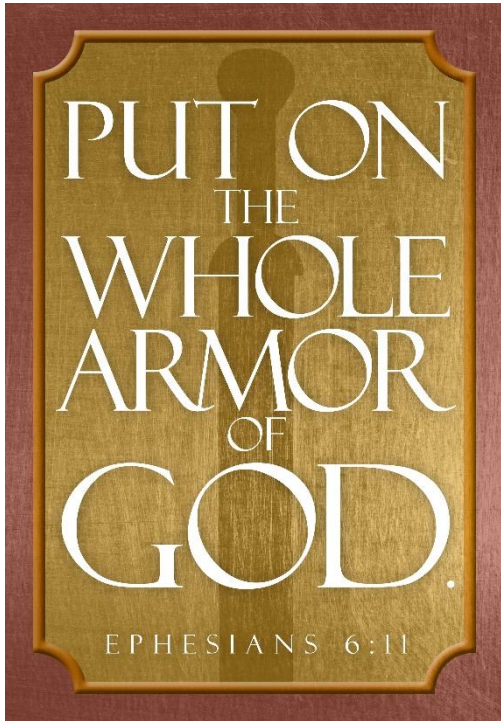
B. Being at the Pride Festival isn’t always the easiest job for me.

1. It means spending time submerged in a lifestyle and culture different from my own.

2. It means spending 6 hours extroverting – and coming home exhausted – but, I do it because it’s important.

3. I do it because it's what we are called to do as God's people in the world, as we strive to bring God's love to our world – to spread the good news of God's love; especially to those who have been hurt or abandoned by the Church – and consequently, to some, by God.

## II. Whole Armor of God



A. But we don't have to do this alone.

1. St. Paul, in our NT lesson, gives us some wonderful advice as to how to proceed.

2. Using the image of a Roman Soldier preparing for battle, Paul writes: *"Therefore take up the whole armor of God ...*

*- Stand, therefore, and fasten the **belt of truth** around your waist*

*- and put on the **breastplate of righteousness***

*- As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you **ready to proclaim the gospel of peace***

*- With all these, take **the shield of faith, ... the helmet of salvation, and the sword to truth, which is the word of God.**"*

3. Now let's take a look at these tools we have been given.

4. First we have the **Belt of truth** – by this St. Paul means we are upheld by the **Truth** and ready for anything.

5. By the **Breastplate of righteousness** we are upheld by our relationship with God.

6. The **Shoes for our feet** means that we are equipped and ready to go to proclaim the Good News of Jesus and God's love wherever we are sent.

7. The **Shield of Faith** helps us to RESIST the nagging questions of doubt.

8. The **Helmet of salvation** is the **all-protecting LOVE OF CHRIST** who gave himself for us that we may live.

9 And the **Sword of truth** is none other than the **Word of God** that leads us and guides us as we are sent out to be God's people in the world.

B. These images might make us feel a bit uncomfortable, but there was a time when nothing seemed more righteous than to be part of the "Army of God" to fight "sin, the world, and the Devil."

1. Paul lived in a time and place where it was believed that Evil Spirits abounded – and he believed that Christians were engaged in Spiritual Warfare.

2. This spiritual interpretation continued on, as we read of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and their struggles for holiness.

3. Early Christians were not permitted to join the Roman Army and take part in battles, but by the fifth century, the Church has started to develop doctrines that Christians could fight to "convert Infidels" and spread the glory of Christ.

4. The Crusades in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries are probably the apex of this theology of battle for Christ.

5. This Theology of "spiritual warfare" came later to be known as the "Church Militant" where the Church is engaged in constant warfare against the powers of evil.

6. Its popularity declined during the Reformation – as Protestantism and Catholicism fought each other, but again reached great popularity during the Great Awakening of the 1800's and again in the Victorian era.

7. And it can also be seen in the rise of groups like the Salvation Army or the Church Army in the Anglican Church.

- Quick aside – the founding minister of St. Columba's in the 1950's was Captain Lewis – of the Church Army.

8. And nowhere was this theology more popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries than in their hymns – as they urged people to stand together to fight the evils of their world – hymns like “Onward Christian Soldiers” and our first hymn today, “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.”

C. Dudley Tyng was the rector of one to the Episcopal Churches in Philadelphia in the mid 1850's, and was a leader of a great REVIVAL that swept across Philadelphia – at one service alone, over 1,000 people were saved.

1. While visiting a farm in the country, Dudley Tyng was injured in a farm accident and died.

2. Before he died, he told his father, “Tell my brethren of the ministry, whenever you meet them, to stand for Jesus.”

3. George Duffield, who was the Pastor of Temple Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and had worked with Tyng on these revivals, was the preacher at Dudley Tyng's funeral, based on the words of our NT lesson: “stand firm, wearing the whole armor of God.”

4. He concluded his sermon by reciting a poem that he had written inspired by the words of his friend:

- *“Stand up, stand up, for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross...”*

### III. Living it out

A. We too are called to respond – to be God's people in the world.

1. We may not like the imagery in the hymns, or the violence of “the Church Militant” but we too are called to put on the **“whole armor of God”** and respond.

*For the*  
**Remembrance**  
*of Me*



2. Jesus needs US to be His people out in the world.

3. He needs Us to be his living body – and so He nourishes us with his Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

4. What do we say in the prayer after we have received Communion?

- *“Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue for ever in the risen life of Christ our Savior.”*

5. That’s what we are called to do – but are we going to step up or shrink away?

6. Each time Jesus gives us his Body and Blood, he asks us once again, “Do you want to go away too?”

B. We too are called to “put on the whole armor of God” and to be God’s people in the world.

1. If you think of it, the “Breastplate of Righteousness” is not all that different from the Celtic Lorica – in fact, it’s the same thing.

2. Lorica was the Celtic Word for Breastplate – just as the Breastplate protected the heart – so too the Lorica prayer spiritually protected the whole person.

3. What is our “Breastplate of Righteousness” – our “Lorica” – our spiritual protection?

C. As we have learned these past few weeks, through the Eucharist Jesus gives us his WORD and his BODY and BLOOD to strengthen us in doing his work in the world.

1. And what is that work?

2. **“This is the work of God that you believe in him who he has sent.”**

3. We are Jesus hands and feet – we are all he’s got.

4. We are the ones called to be REVEALERS of God and God’s love to the world.

5. We are the ones whom God has sent to find those people who walked away and became lost.

6. We are the ones who are called to help them make room in their lives for Christ's life-giving spirit.

7. If we don't do it than nobody else will – and those people will just keep walking away from Jesus because they don't understand his teaching and think his demands are too hard.

### Conclusion

Through his Body and Blood, Jesus abides in us and we in him.

Through our participation in the Eucharist, we are better able to do that which we are called to do:

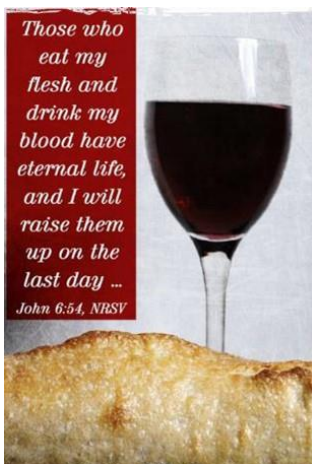
- to seek the lost and to bring God's open and abundant love to all God's people.

We, like Peter, must say, "Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Put on the "whole armor of God" – and let's get to work being God's people in God's world.

"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

### Let Us Pray



Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN.

(BCP p. 219)