



## *email Communiqué*

**Society of King Charles the Martyr - American Region**  
***Charles Chapman Grafton, Bishop, died 30 August 1912***  
***Co-Founder SSJE & Founder SHN***

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## **Bishop Charles Chapman Grafton – Remember!**

**O**n August 30th, 1912, Bishop Grafton entered eternal life in his room at the Convent of the Holy Nativity in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. At 82, he had been failing physically for some time, wasted by disease and exhaustion. At the age when many clergy used to retire, he had been elected the second bishop of the small, struggling diocese of Fond du Lac in Northeastern Wisconsin—an area primarily inhabited by recent immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, and also home to many of the Oneida tribe of the Iroquois. His tenure lasted 22 years, and at first he often snowshoed and sledged through the snowy and frozen winter landscapes of the area to build



up a struggling diocese into a viable one. By 1900, Grafton left the more strenuous aspects to his Coadjutor, Bishop Reginald Weller, and concentrated on writing theological works to advance the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Episcopal Church and elsewhere. He had been active in the House of Bishops and at the early Lambeth Conferences, and he was a celebrated preacher and ecumenist. But at the end, he kept to his small, cell-like room at the convent of the order of Sisters he had founded, devoting himself to prayer and preparation for the next world.

Grafton never wrote about the Royal Martyr in depth. His clearest statement mentions in a 1900 letter to a goddaughter that he admired him as “a very good man and a martyr.” However, his life displays a pattern we see in King Charles. In this piece I will draw out some of these parallels. As an American, Grafton was an ardent believer in democracy. Yet one may take Charles Stuart’s life and death as a model of Christian fortitude without sharing his belief in the Divine Right of Kings.

Though Grafton was man of ascetic habits, he had been raised in a very different milieu. He came from an old and wealthy Boston family. His father was a military officer, while his four brothers followed suit. Ill health in boyhood and poor eyesight made such a career impossible for this particular son, so he trained for the law, his parents hoping he might become a politician. Indeed, he distinguished himself at Harvard, where he took up the abolitionist cause with fervor. But he had started attending Boston's Church of the Advent, modeled on the Oxford Tractarian Movement, and under its influence, he felt a call to the priesthood. As the Bishop of Massachusetts was a Low Churchman, Grafton's rector advised him to seek ordination in the Diocese of Maryland. He served his curacy there during the Civil War, and despite his own deep anti-slavery convictions, felt it his duty to try and keep a deeply divided congregation together for the sake of unity. This decision continued to haunt him for the rest of his life, and his ambivalence about it probably determined his future course.

While in Baltimore, he worked with Adeline Blanchard Tyler, a widow who had gone to Germany after her husband's death to train at Kaiserswerth where Lutheran women were trained as deaconesses for nursing. Grafton was already considering some kind of Anglican monastic orders. A number of Sisterhoods had been established by Anglo-Catholics in England, so he resolved to go there in 1865. He spent time with Doctor Pusey, the great Tractarian leader; he also became close friends with the early ritualist John Mason Neale, and acted as a chaplain to the Sisters of Saint Margaret that Neale had founded. Together with Richard Meux Benson—the Vicar of Cowley near Oxford—he founded the Society of St. John the Evangelist, one of the first male religious orders in Anglicanism. They and their followers took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and said the sevenfold office in their chapel. However, on the street they wore simple cassocks, believing that to imitate medieval habits would only increase the hostility many Anglicans, along with other denominations, already felt toward what they considered "popish" practices.

Grafton's experiences in England convinced him that despite lip service to piety, society was becoming increasingly secular, with the Church's moral influence disregarded when it came to social issues. The factories that made more and more luxuries inexpensively available to the middle classes exploited the poor by forcing them to work long hours for minimal wages in dangerous and unhealthy conditions. Grafton had worked with Fr. Charles Lowder at the Church of St. Peter in the London Docks, which served the grim slums of the East End, trying to bring a sense of hope and order to those whose lives often held neither. Teaching was a significant part of their mission—both spiritual and practical.



Accepting his religious vow of poverty, this hitherto wealthy and pampered young man now made do with bare necessities. For the rest of his life, he gave all the money that came into his hands to the needy or to missions that served them. But he also concluded that social change could not come from education and more equitable laws alone; it required conversion of heart as well. As we

become more Christlike, we learn to respect the dignity of every human being because we are all made in God's image and loved equally by him. The visible sign of this is Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. Finally, Grafton saw the Religious Life as the prototype of true democracy: a community making decisions in common, whose leadership has term limits and cannot abuse its power because it can be voted out by the other members. This interpretation counters the still frequent argument that democratic governance is somehow opposed to the Church's authority and the Catholic ethos. It is significant that Grafton's vision, unlike many Anglo-Catholics of his period, was not based on an idealized past, but on following Jesus in the humility of his earthly ministry. Christ is the authority of the Church, and we must be like him.

Inspired by this vision from his experiences in England, Grafton now wished to return to his native country to adapt that vision to the more democratic ethos of the Episcopal Church. But his ensuing experiences were about to lead him into a kind of personal martyrdom, testing his own principles. In 1872, Grafton was called as the next rector of Boston's Church of the Advent. Here he was assisted



THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT

by English Cowley Fathers, along with some Sisters of Saint Margaret, whose chaplain he was, and whom he had helped bring over from England. The Advent flourished and by the mid-1880s half the baptisms in the Diocese of Massachusetts took place there. But despite these successes, tension grew between Cowley and Grafton. Benson tried to control the Fathers working in Boston and Philadelphia. Grafton understood that English attitudes and assumptions often repelled Americans, as well as breaching Episcopal canons. He pleaded for greater autonomy and reminded Benson that they had originally agreed on a written rule for the Order. Benson only tightened the screws. As Fr. Eldridge Pendleton's recent biography disclosed, Grafton was being undermined by his own Senior Warden in correspondence with the English Superior. In 1884, Grafton resigned his SSJE membership. Immediately, the Sisters of Saint Margaret dismissed him as their spiritual director.

Both in England and in the United States, the Cowley Fathers and others slandered him and questioned his mental stability. Grafton treated his opponents with unflinching kindness, but his sensitive temperament suffered enormously. He poignantly recalled this period in his autobiography, *A Journey Godward of A Servant of Jesus Christ*: "God knew how I had failed in many ways; how strong self, with all its ambitions and desires, was; how necessary it was for my heart to be humbled and crushed. One can, in old age, be thankful for it all.... It did not do all it might have done, but it helped me, made me more real, somewhat emptied me of self, wrought a spirit of charity in me, and I got up and joined the host of forgiven cripples, and went stumbling on to God."

The American members of the Sisters of Saint Margaret followed Grafton. Led by Sister Ruth Margaret Vose, who had known him since childhood, they asked him to form a new Sisterhood—the Sisters of the Holy Nativity, whose work would be serving in parishes. This was a different model than any of the previous English women’s orders, and it proved successful. Their spiritual life focused on “the interior life of our Lord in his humility during his earthly ministry, and in his presence in the Blessed Sacrament.”

Almost immediately, Grafton’s friend, Fr. George McClellan Fiske, the rector of S. Stephen’s in Providence, Rhode Island, begged for some of the new Sisterhood to work in his parish. In 1888, Grafton resigned from The Advent. He had presided over its move to the new church on Brimmer Street, but now wanted to found a new Religious Order for men. He and the Sisters moved to Providence. Later in the same year, Fr. Fiske was elected Bishop of Fond du Lac. S. Stephen’s begged their beloved rector not to leave, so he turned down the call, suggesting they elect Grafton instead. For a brief time, however, Grafton’s confirmation was not a sure thing. Already, dioceses in the upper Midwest were adopting an Anglo-Catholicism that alarmed many Eastern and Southern bishops, and Grafton’s reputation as an “extreme ritualist” disturbed many, as did his celibacy. Fr. James DeKoven, also celibate, had not received confirmations, though elected several times. But DeKoven was a prickly character, whereas Grafton was personable. The support of the Bishop of Massachusetts, Phillips Brooks, assured his victory.



At the time of his consecration, the future of the diocese of Fond du Lac was in doubt. Many of the original settlers in Northeast Wisconsin had moved West with the expansion of railroads after the Civil War. Their place had been taken by immigrants from Middle and Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, unlikely Anglicans. The cathedral had recently burned, leaving only a stone shell, and the first bishop died prematurely from overwork and the harsh climate. But where others saw a daunting prospect, Grafton saw opportunity. He raised money from his Eastern friends to rebuild the cathedral. Like King Charles, he loved the arts, and sent young women to study in Roman studios (shades of Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*). He imported wood carvers from Oberammergau, both to adorn his churches and to train young men to continue the tradition. He tirelessly preached and taught, building up the diocese, and shaping it according to his Catholic and transcendental social vision which proved compelling not only to wealthy lumber barons and baronesses, but also to the Oneida nation, whose women were instructed in the profitable skill of lacemaking by the Sisters of the Holy Nativity. Grafton also began to forge ecumenical ties with the Old Catholic Churches that had broken with Rome at the time of Vatican I, and with the Russian Orthodox Church.

At the consecration of his Coadjutor in 1900, Grafton invited both the Russian Bishop of the Americas—Tikhon, later to become Patriarch of Moscow—and the Archbishop of the Polish National Catholic Church. A picture of the various Episcopal and Ecumenical dignitaries became known to a hostile press as “the Fond du Lac Circus,” not only for the copes and miters (still uncommon among Episcopal bishops) but for what a Green Bay paper called “a man of alien faith”—the Russian bishop. Grafton’s brave ecumenism is still held in honor by the Orthodox who recall his friendship with Saint Tikhon, and his chaplain, Saint John Kochurov. The latter, martyred by the



Bolsheviks in 1917, is considered the hieromartyr of the Russian Revolution, while Tikhon died in 1925 under Soviet house arrest. Before that, Grafton visited the Russian Patriarch in Moscow in 1905. He treasured their friendship. His connection with these Russian martyrs irresistibly reminds us of the religious and political persecution suffered by Anglicans under the Puritans. When Tikhon died, a picture of “The Fond du Lac Circus” was found hidden under the floor boards of his cell. What

American newspapers once published with scorn and derision, now hangs in certain Orthodox churches as an icon. Unfortunately, Grafton’s efforts to forge ties between the Episcopal Church and the Old Catholics were derailed by ethnic and anti-Catholic prejudices. It was a great sorrow to him, another aspect of his spiritual martyrdom. He doubtless rejoices in heaven at the knowledge that the Old Catholics have been in full communion with Anglicans since 1932.

Despite his activities in the cause of the Church at home and abroad, many outside his diocese continued to regard him as an eccentric. In a eulogy preached at a memorial service for Grafton. Fr. Fiske observed, “the world, of course, is not likely to—cannot be expected to—appreciate such characters or to think very highly of them. It cannot understand them. They contradict what it esteems in its wisdom and its common sense. The world was not worthy of him, it looked on him with a mingled indifference, scorn and contempt, of which the best that could be said was that it was for the most part goodnatured.”

Bishop Grafton’s importance, only briefly touched on in this article, is increasingly recognized by the Church. His voluminous writings have been a touchstone for Anglo-Catholics for generations, both for their delineation of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism, and for their deep spiritual wisdom. He was a genuine saint who demonstrates that although many of us may not be called to die on a scaffold for our faith, we may nonetheless be martyrs to self to become the people God means us to become. May Grafton be always remembered and may we be worthy of his heritage.

- *Phoebe Pettingell, Vice-President for Communications; Member, SKCM-AR Board of Trustees*

*Pictures: Bp Grafton (p 1), St Peter’s London Docks (p 2), Advent Boston (p 3), St Paul’s Cathedral Fond du Lac (p 4), and “The Fond du Lac Circus” (p 5)*



## SKCM NEWS Update

God willing and technology cooperating, the plan is for the summer (June) edition of the Society's semiannual magazine to reach all of us during the next few weeks. In putting together this edition we have encountered some unforeseen technical problems which we believe that we have overcome, plus a need for key volunteers concerned to help with corporal works of mercy during this time of health challenges.

We'll be receiving the annual Royal Martyr Day edition, which will share with our world our President's splendid Annual Mass sermon, highlight the many of local observances, thank the donors whose financial support is always an important element, etc. So get ready for some good reading that testifies to this key piece of the Society's devotional mission!

## Regular Devotions Suggested for American Region Members

The *Devotional Manual* for the use of Society members reminds us of our obligation to organize and participate in a Royal Martyr Day service on or around 30 January. We are also called upon to organize and encourage the observation of other Caroline anniversaries during the year, three of them being the Recognition of the *Cultus* (Canonization; 26 April), Restoration Day (29 May), and the Nativity (19 November). In the near future, the Society will be sharing the liturgical propers for the Nativity, in addition those heretofore made available for Royal Martyr Day; thus we will be following the pattern of our Mother Society in the United Kingdom. It is not by accident that most editions of the *Communique*, including the current one, begin with a reflection on a seasonal Caroline or related anniversary. Remember!

The Manual also advocates that one set a daily or weekly time for personal SKCM devotions, which should complement or supplement one's usual devotions. SKCM devotions are suggested to include the day's or week's collect, reflection on an event from the Manual's *Kalendar of Anniversaries*, and other features, in particular praying for the souls of the former members who have passed from this life to the next on the particular day or week. (If you do not have the *Manual*, it is one of the Society goods available for purchase, and it is given to each new member without charge.)

As a devotional society it is important for us to remember the years' minds for the day or week. The *Devotional Manual* contains a *Necrological Calendar* incorporating the names in question and continues with appropriate prayers for the dead and dying. The Calendar contained in the Manual was updated early in 2018. Since the *Necrological Calendar* is updated on a continuing basis, including adding the dates of death of former members when available, we are attaching an updated version with this edition of the *Communique*. You are encouraged to include its contents as an ongoing part of your prayers.



*Into Paradise may the Angels lead thee, at thy coming may the Martyrs receive thee, and bring thee into the holy city Jerusalem. May the quire of Angels welcome thee, and with Lazarus, who once was poor, mayest thou have eternal rest. Amen.*

## An Ideal Time to Join

**This is an ideal time to join the Society.** Since we are so close to the end of the membership year, any new memberships now are being credited through 30 Sep 2022. So, do not be shy about giving the attached flyer to a friend and/or getting it copied and put into the tract rack of your local church!



### ***S.K.C.M. (AMERICAN REGION)***

PRESIDENT (THE REV'D STEVEN C. RICE, OBL.S.B., D.MIN.): [PRESIDENT@SKCM-USA.ORG](mailto:PRESIDENT@SKCM-USA.ORG);  
TO SUBMIT ARTICLES & INQUIRIES TO THE **SKCM NEWS**, PLEASE CONTACT [EDITORS@SKCM-USA.ORG](mailto:EDITORS@SKCM-USA.ORG);  
OTHER INQUIRIES: [MEMBERSHIP@SKCM-USA.ORG](mailto:MEMBERSHIP@SKCM-USA.ORG).

#### ***OUR SURFACE MAILING ADDRESS:***

*SOCIETY OF KING CHARLES THE MARTYR  
C/O DAVID LEWIS, TREASURER/ADMINISTRATOR  
1001 WILSON BLVD #609, ARLINGTON VA 22209-2262 USA*

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