

# Sentimentality?



We 21st-century Americans are not very good at remembering our past. Americans have always been "forward looking" and happy to embrace change. Old buildings are torn down to make space for new ones; old political

## An Architectural Reminder of our heritage.

ideas give way to "modern" ideas; and old people are retired to make room for the young. We are told over and over again that the future will be brighter and that people in the past were not nearly so sophisticated as we.

But we are commanded in Scripture to "hand on the faith once delivered to the saints." This is what is meant by historic Christianity. We are the heirs of a long tradition for which countless Christians have given their lives. The Faith is not for us to tamper with, to change to suit our own ideas, our own whims.

But living in an ever-changing society as we do, we frequently need to be reminded of this. As traditional Anglicans, we believe that Christians who worship in a modern way in a modern-looking church begin to lose sight of their past. They forget about the historic Church.

# A Liturgy of a Historic Community

Our Prayer Book has slowly been crafted by worshipping Anglicans over the centuries. When you worship on Sunday, you say many of the same prayers used by Thomas Cranmer, Queen Elizabeth I, George Washington, and countless other Christians. The words themselves thus become a vocal connection to those Anglicans who have "fought the good fight" and handed on the Faith intact to us. Anglicanism in particular has always been shaped by her liturgy, the Book of Common Prayer, which with Shakespeare and the King James' Version has influenced our language more than any other work. Today, our Prayer Book serves not only to identify us as traditional Anglicans, but also to keep us safely moored to our roots.

# A Sense of the Sacred

Another feature of us 21st-century Americans is that we hold ourselves in high regard. We don't like to be under anybody else's authority. Christian virtues such as obedience, humility, submissiveness are considered signs of weakness. We also demand to be entertained. No where is all this more evident than in today's worship. Reverence has given way



Medieval Statuary of the Saints

to lively, emotionally "exciting" praise fellowship.

In worship, we come together not so much to gain a blessing from God as to perform a service, to "offer ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto the Lord." From the start of the Reformation, Anglicans have believed that worship ought to be liturgical in a language understood by the people, ought to profess the "reformed Catholic" faith, and ought to be (as St. Paul stipulates) reverent and orderly.

Anglicans believe that we need to be reminded that we are sinners, that we are all personally responsible for the Son of God having to "suffer death upon the cross." We believe that our pride has to be torn down in order for us properly to adore God. Our service is meant to convey that sense of humble reverence.

It is also meant to provide us with an escape from the boisterous, fast-paced world in which we live. Most people come to appreciate how precious this time can be. We must remember that worship is an awesome work. In worship, the community comes before God not only with praise and thanksgiving, but also mindful of its own unworthiness and sinfulness. The reverence of worship is a necessary antidote to human egocentrism. Reverent and orderly worship also enables the community to step out of the "secular" and experience the "sacred." In this way, both the individual and the community are constantly reminded of the spiritual, the corporate, the historical, and the mystical aspects of the Body of Christ.