
Letters to a Young Episcopalian: How Do We Balance Reason and Mystery?

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Dear Anna,

Your last question was about how Anglicans can hold together both reason and mystery.

I think Anglicanism is at its best when it honors both — the sharpness of thought and the depth of silence. It is not compromise but balance, a dialectical habit of mind.

You can see this disposition in the prayer habits of the early monks. They debated fiercely about doctrine, yet they also sat in caves whispering only, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy." They did not see thought and prayer as rivals. Reason clarified faith; silence deepened it.

We have kept that rhythm. We value scholarship — sermons and study groups can stretch our minds. But we also kneel at altars and light candles without explaining every detail. Both belong. When reason grows arrogant, mystery humbles it. When mystery grows vague, reason steadies it.

So if you ever feel torn between head and heart, remember they are meant to work together. Our faith is neither rigid dogma nor free-floating spirituality. It is a way that trusts God with both our questions and our wonder.

Your affectionate uncle,
Ames