

St. James' E-pistle

January 3, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Happy New Year once again! We had a pleasant time New Year's Eve except for a strange little snow storm that hit central Poughkeepsie. I'm not kidding. We were driving along dry roads when suddenly, near Marist, it was snowing, and the roads became nasty. As we drove south, we passed a bad accident on the northbound lane which closed the entire road.

Then it stopped, and the roads were clear again.

Today, as I write, the snow has begun in Hyde Park, and it promises to be a significant snowfall with very cold temperatures. So be careful out there! Check up on your neighbors/fellow parishioners, too. And it wouldn't be a bad idea in general to have an emergency pack for those times when you have no power or need to evacuate for some reason.

Now, while I'm talking about taking care of ourselves, let me address another kind of self-care. Spiritual.

In fact, though I normally do not make New Year's resolutions, this year I have resolved to make a spiritual practice part of my routine. More than bible reading (the bible challenge has been very good, though indeed challenging!), I resolve to take a monthly retreat day at the Monastery.

It seems I have been far too distracted with daily life, and while this is a hazard for everyone, it is a significant part of my ministry to remain spiritually grounded. That means making time pray, read and sit with God. Mostly likely, I will do this on the first or second Wednesday of each month. When I have that ironed out with the monastery, I will publish a schedule so that you will know when I am in spiritual retreat.

I encourage you also to resolve to focus on your spiritual life, your intimate time with God. If you can't remember what that feels like, that's a pretty good indicator that you are in need of spiritual care.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that this Monday will mark the Feast of Epiphany. On Saturday, we have our Epiphany pageant, and on Sunday we will read the Epiphany Gospel.

When I reflect on the significance of the Epiphany - the opening up of a loving relationship with God to all people, then I am encouraged with my resolution. After all, if that relationship

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is open to all, including me, then it would be a tragedy if I did not engage in it to the fullest. How about you? Can you resolve to engage with God?

In Christ,
Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Pageant: Remember - Our Epiphany Pageant is this **Saturday, January 4 at 6:30 PM.** We hope to see EVERYONE there!

Acolytes training & schedule: An acolyte training session will take place on **Sunday, February 2 following the 10:00 AM service.** All acolytes, new and old, are expected to attend (everyone needs a refresher now and then - consider it continuing education). This is especially important for those who are new or who are ready to make the leap from torch to crucifer. We will also discuss the function of a thurifer.

Annual Meeting Notice: The annual meeting of St. James' Church, Hyde Park will take place on **Sunday, January 26,** beginning with Holy Eucharist at 9:00 AM with the polls for Vestry open. All communicants in good standing of the parish (members who have received communion at least three times in the past year and are regular in giving for the ministry of the gospel), are eligible to vote.

There will be a light breakfast as well as the awarding of the St. James' Medal.

Fireside Chats: The Fireside Chat Series begins this month on Friday, January 16 at 7:00 PM. The first session, titled, "Chattel: The Building of New York State" is given by Lorraine Roberts, retired educator and chairwoman of the Black History Project Committee and member of the Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project. A reception will follow.

Notice of Inquirers classes: Bishop Dietsche will visit St. James' on December 14, 2014. He will confirm, receive and reaffirm the faith of all who seek it. To be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church, you need to participate in the Inquirer's Series of classes. If you have not already done so, please see Fr. Chuck about registering for the classes. You have to be at least 13 to participate, and anyone under 16 must come to Fr. Chuck personally (their parents cannot speak for them) to discuss why they want to be confirmed.

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kurt Burkhardt, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, Jack Gordy, Andy Hall, Harold Hall, Jolanda Heijenbrok, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Deborah Porach, Don Renten, John Robinson, Marty Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way and Cliff Wells.

Schedules

Schedules will reappear next week. They are currently being updated.

This Week's Lectionary

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 84

Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a

Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon Preached on
First Sunday after Christmas
(12/29/2014)

"Words and Walls"

Since we're still in the Christmas season, and Christmas is all about celebrating the birth of a child, I'd like to invite you to imagine that you're the newborn.

When you're a newborn, the things you notice most (other than hunger and poop) may be walls and words.

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Words you don't understand but comfort you mostly. Walls hold you close. From a warm blanket to the crib, they hold you close and, yes, comfort you. As you learn to move around, they then keep you from falling (like side of crib). They are good.

But as you age, walls get in the way. You want to get into things, and walls keep you out. You don't want to nap, and walls keep you in. They control you. Words, too. You get the comforting words of mama and papa, but then there's this troubling word "no" which accompanies those pesky walls.

Then words become walls. The physical walls begin to drop away little by little until only the words control you because you understand their meaning and their purpose (not to mention their consequences). Yet you continue to age until the words are internalized - they are part of you - and the only walls you have are those you agree to.

You are an adult. Growing still - always growing - but able to shed the physical walls and move forward trusting in your own conscience. Trusting the person you have become thanks to those words & walls.

This is sort of what Paul was getting at in his letter to the Galatians today. He says in essence that Jesus was born with the same words and walls that we all are - that Jesus was born under the law, our disciplinarian. By disciplinarian, he meant something specific. Children of wealthier families at the time were often cared for by our equivalent of nannies. Sometimes hired, sometimes slaves but with great authority over the child. They taught the child both academic and social lessons, they helped them overcome failure, they guided them in right behavior and could punish or reward as necessary. They often retained this authority up to the time the child became an adult.

Paul says that Jesus grew up and became the first adult who is now leading us to adulthood. He did not destroy the law just as we don't destroy the words like "no" when we grow up - or the child gate that blocks the stairs. We don't destroy them or their purpose, we just don't need them anymore. The same is true with the law - because Jesus has shown us the path to adulthood, we no longer need the law.

Instead of words and walls, we now simply need the Word. The internalized awareness that you and I are God's beloved children. The Word, which spoke the world into existence, the Word which spoke us into being, the Word which is life and light, which shines in the darkness. The Word from which all other words flow, The Word which became flesh and dwelt among us... This is the Word that now is internalized in us.

We know that Word is deep abiding, self-aware and self-giving love, and it is more powerful than any disciplinarian. But Paul is only partially right in saying that we no longer need those words and walls of the disciplinarian. Maybe he gave us too much credit. Many of us cannot see

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Christ yet, cannot follow out of fear. It is comforting, after all, to remain a child and be told what to do.

Paul urges us to grow up. To grow beyond the fear and to trust the Word.

Remember that we're imagining ourselves as a child? Where are YOU in that journey to adulthood? Are you an infant? A toddler? An adolescent? What are your walls? What are the words that still guide you? What is your disciplinarian?

Or have you, as Paul hoped, internalized the Word? Only you can decide. Amen.