

St. James' E-pistle

January 8, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

It has not been a quiet week at St. James'. It's been, in the midst of our cold snap, anything but. Sunday concluded with rehearsal for our pageant this upcoming Sunday - then we had another one on Tuesday. In between, I spent more hours than I expected preparing for the first Fireside Chat. I don't know why it made me so nervous, but it did!

Thursday was the chat itself, and though it will have taken place by the time you read this, it has not yet happened at this time. I think my nervousness is because of how important the topic is to our collective life as a nation and as a church. The topic was, of course, "Slavery, New York, and the Church."

For any community to thrive, the past has to be acknowledged and addressed. Our past, at least as far as slavery is concerned, is anything but stellar. You might even say that the Episcopal Church was among the most ardent defenders of slavery in New York. Yet somehow, we have grown in our understanding of God's will. In the past 65 years or so, the Episcopal Church has gone from a "don't rock the boat" stance to one in which we publicly proclaim the value, worth, and dignity of every human being. In fact, in those years, we have become a leader in the inexorable march toward justice for all.

So this Fireside Chat is, for me, a moment to look honestly at our past - which affects us still today - and use the awareness of our past sins to work toward a future of peace, justice and reconciliation. May we all look unflinchingly at our own lives so we can improve our lives together.

If that's all too heavy for you (and it is sobering), then let me encourage you to join us this Sunday at the 10:00 AM service where we recreate the light-hearted "Desert Home Companion" pageant with all new skits and music. It's not as long as in the past, but it should give you a smile as well as remind you of God's love for all humanity.

So, Happy Epiphany! It is a season of work, making God known to the world. It can be hard, sobering work. But it can also be fun!

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Many Thanks to the Altar Guild for its superhuman effort in cleaning the church after the Christmas season. The work was daunting, and the laborers were few. If you would like to be part of the Altar Guild, please contact Pat Holland or Lynne Koch. We especially need members from the 10:00 AM congregation!

Epiphany Pageant: On Sunday, January 10, we will hold our Epiphany Pageant. It will take place during the 10 AM service - actually, it will replace most of the first half of the service, so you'll get out about the usual time. We think you'll like this one!

Pageant Dress Rehearsal: Saturday, January 9 at 10:00 AM

Sunday School News: There will be no Sunday School on January 10 because of the Epiphany Pageant. Come watch the show!

Men's Breakfast: The January breakfast is on January 23 at 8:00 AM and will be at the parish hall kitchen for a clean-up day. Note: this is not our normal third Saturday of the month. We'll return to that schedule in February.

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting will be on Sunday, January 24 this year, starting with voting and the Holy Eucharist at 9:00 AM. All members in good standing who are 18 or over are eligible to vote. A member in good standing is a member who has been regular in worship and giving for the ministry of the church for the past year.

PLEASE PLEDGE! You received a pledge card back in November, and we thank you if you have filled out and returned your card already. However, many have not yet done so, and we need you! Whether you pledge a lot or a little, it is of vital importance that every household pledge. I would desperately love to see 100% of the parish pledging. Kids can pledge with a special children's pledge card - no amount is too small. The main thing is that each of us steps up and says, "I Want to Be Part of God's Life Here!"

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The News of the Diocese

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: Please pray for these diocesan ministries this week. If you want to check out the entire year's calendar for intercession, it's simple to find - go to <http://www.diocesenyc.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

- 10 St. Paul's Church, The Bronx
- 11 St. John's Church, Staten Island
- 12 The Board of Campus Ministry
- 13 All Saints' Church, Briarcliff Manor
- 14 St. John's Church, Larchmont
- 15 On the feast day for Martin Luther King, Jr. we pray that we may we also work for peace and justice.
- 16 The Anti-Racism Committee of the Diocese

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

1. Candle for Peace

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

2. The Mothers Prayer:

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

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For our children crying in the night,
For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.
For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?
With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at these harsh times
I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.
Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one for another.
Inscribe our lives in the book of Life
For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.
For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,
May this be your will
And let us say Amen.

Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Schedules

A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is alright.

Birthdays
(this past week): John Golden; Sanjana Shahani; Ryan Seagren; Chris Granados-Kramer

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Birthdays (next week):	Jodi Triola; Brian O'Leary; Craig M. Slegel; Joan Oetjen; Isabela Handman Quines
Acolytes:	January 10: Russell, John Beyer and Anna January 17: Bryanna, Amelia and Braeden
Altar Guild:	January 10: Team Number I January 17: Team Number II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 10: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden January 17: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	January 10: Pageant – no readers needed January 17: Wilma Tully and Nancy Montero
Ushers:	January 10: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe January 17: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	January 10: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright January 17: Doug Belding and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 10: Liz Handman and Franklin Santos and Bela Quines and Chris Santos; Angela Henry January 17: Susan Heupler; Ruth Hitchcock
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 10: Jodi Triola, Ross & Connie Eames, Pat Rooney January 17: Dierdre Mae Micker, The Urban-Meads

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalm 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, www.stjameshydepark.org Look under "Worship"

Sermon Preached on
Second Sunday after Christmas
(January 3, 2016)

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Starting Right

Happy New Year again. You know, it's important to start the year right, isn't it? That's why we make resolutions each year - to start it off right! Nobody ever follows through, of course, but it's important to start right! Right?

One of the things I love about today's Gospel is that Jesus doesn't actually seem to be off to a good start.

Let me back up and say there are several things I really like about this passage in the gospel - and I think it gets sold short by most of us.

First, this is the first appearance of Jesus after his infancy. Twelve years have passed since the magi visited. Well, the magi don't appear at all in Luke, but that's beside the point. The point is, this is his earliest post-baby appearance - and it's one in which he gets in trouble.

Second, it is the only passage showing Jesus as a kid. Which makes you wonder why Luke went out of his way to write it. More on that later.

Third, this passage really shows how Jesus embraced the full range of humanity. I mean right at the onset of puberty! Complete with all the adolescent attitude. If we translated his response to a more modern expression, he might have said, "Where did you think I'd be? Duh!" Or "Seriously? You had to ask where I'd be?"

Fourth, this passage shows the saintliness of both Mary and Joseph, because if I had done anything like that, my parents would not have contented themselves with, "Child, why have you treated us like this?" And if I had answered the way Jesus did, I promise you my mother would not have treasured it in her heart!

But seriously, Luke had a reason for including this little slice of life that nobody else thought of.

I suspect it is precisely because Jesus' first appearance after the nativity is NOT of him performing a miracle or being baptized (where a miracle also happens when God speaks). It's of him giving his parents attitude.

Of course, Jesus is the Son of God, and it does make sense therefore to search for him in the temple, but they went to Jerusalem every year, and up to this point, Jesus had never pulled a stunt like this.

I would argue that it is precisely because Jesus is twelve that things change, and Luke wants us to see that change. Because he is hitting adolescence - that awkward period of life when the

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lights start popping on, and you start seeing the world in a new way. You start seeing yourself as a unique individual and begin the long process of separating from your parents.

For Jesus, this would mean a moment of clarity about who he is, and an awareness that he belongs at the temple - or wherever he can talk about and be in the presence of God.

On a practical level, this is also the age when your parents would trust you in a crowd more, so they're not watching over you as carefully as before, which gave Jesus a perfect opportunity to wander off and not be missed.

So, what's Luke saying with this little episode? That Jesus did not step out of nowhere as a fully formed adult, as Mark and John make it seem. He didn't just make an appearance as an infant and then disappear until adulthood as Matthew writes it.

These can give the impression that Jesus wasn't really truly human. Indeed, a lot of people thought exactly that. As God's Son, many thought he could just show up in human form whenever he wanted, skipping over the awkward or uninteresting or "unimportant" parts.

Luke says all of Jesus' life was important. Jesus was fully human, with all the hormonal changes that come with it. The cracking voice, the zits, and the attitude that are unavoidable in human beings.

Luke wants us to know that Jesus really and truly - as the collect for today proclaims - "humbled himself to share our humanity." And that, in my book, is a pretty good start. Amen.