

St. James' E-pistle

January 9, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

The world seems to be reeling from the murder of 13 journalists and cartoonists from the French weekly "Charlie Hebdo." If you're unfamiliar with it, Charlie Hebdo is a newspaper with a strong satirical side, highly critical of all religion. Especially its cartoonists are responsible for blistering portrayals of Muslim clerics as well as Muhammad.

In the past, they have received warnings from unnamed persons to stop these cartoons. Their office was bombed once, and the group taking responsibility for it claimed it was in retaliation for the paper's mocking Islam. The prime suspects (including an 18-year-old young man who turned himself in) are also Muslim.

Predictably, there have been countless cries to kick Muslims out of France. Xenophobia is on the rise not only throughout France but through all of Europe. Many far-right politicians are already saying the Charlie Hebdo attack vindicated their stance on immigration.

The reason I'm writing this isn't because of xenophobia. Indeed, just Tuesday, another terrorist attack has gotten little attention. In that attack, the offices of the NAACP in Colorado Springs were bombed. At present, though no group has taken credit for it, there is a strong suspicion that this was domestic terrorism, likely the product of a purportedly Christian white supremacist group.

More important than who commits the act of terror is how we respond to it. Do we march in the streets? Do we riot? Do we cry for vengeance? What is a human response, and what is a Christian response?

In our bible study this week, we read the twelfth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. In it, he writes, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

We discussed whether this naive, an open invitation to be bullied, stepped on, and dominated by those who use force and violence to get their way. But we also discussed Paul's intentions behind this command were longer term. He knew that people were watching the new religion, that their responses to hatred and oppression would shape the future of the church in society.

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In other words, though Paul knew that blessing those who hate you might be a losing proposition in the short term, in the long run, what people saw was a community that reached out in love and refused to hate in return. That is, they saw a group that embodied God's love.

When young couples come with children to be baptized, this is one of those things I tell them: "They are always watching you." Children learn more from their parents' actions than their words. Never forget that. In the same way, the world learns about God through the church's actions more than its words. And if we are to represent Christ, that means we let go of vengeance and reach out to serve even those who hate us. Even when we have a good chance of being hurt. Even when every fiber in our beings wants to lash out.

In the long run, Christ's way makes for a more just, peaceful and loving world. But that long run may be very long indeed. Let us pray, then, that the countless acts of hatred around our world do not drive us (as a religion or society) to similar actions but prod us into deeper self-giving.

Nobody said following Jesus would be easy, but it's precisely when it's hardest for us that the Gospel can have the biggest impact. Eventually.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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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.diocesen.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
- 17 Grace Church, White Plains

ALSO STILL PRAYING FOR ISRAEL AND GAZA:

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.

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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:
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

Donate to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem: There is an ongoing appeal for donations to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its Al Ahib Hospital in Gaza. Even after a month, even after the ceasefires, the situation in Gaza is desperate, and the hospital continues to see more patients than it can handle. The hospital is still very low on supplies and fuel to keep the lights on (and medical devices running).

If you would like to support the good and holy work of the Diocese of Jerusalem and its hospital, please send donations to:

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
25 Old King's Highway No., Suite 13
Darien, CT 06820

Or online at www.afedj.org

Also, Episcopal Relief and Development is gathering funds for the hospital. Donate online at: www.episcopalrelief.org or mail to Episcopal Relief and Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058 (memo line: Middle East Fund)

Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday: The Episcopal Diocese of New York, at its 238th Annual Convention held on November 14-15, 2014, passed resolutions which call upon

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the congregations and members of the Diocese to engage in an organized commitment to combat sex trafficking.

This Sunday, January 11, has been designated as Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday.

The Reverend Adrian Dannhauser, Rockwell Fellow and assisting priest at St. James' Church, Manhattan, has agreed to convene a Task Force Against Sex Trafficking to guide our diocesan witness and strengthen our capacity to engage this concern. She is eager to hear from members of the Diocese of New York who might bring expertise and energy to this work. Adrian may be reached at adannhauser@stjames.org or at 212-774-4256.

According to the International Labour Organization, 4.5 million people are enslaved in sex trafficking. The vast majority of these modern-day slaves are women and children. As of 2011, the FBI reported that sex trafficking is the fastest-growing business of organized crime, with the United States seeing an increase in both international and domestic victims and an estimated 293,000 more American youths at risk of becoming victims to commercial sexual exploitation. The Department of Justice has identified New York City as one of the top human trafficking jurisdictions in the country, making it incumbent on this Diocese to respond to the continuing and large-scale tragedy of sex slavery.

You are encouraged to observe Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday on January 11th, and to contact your state legislators to encourage their support for TVPJA.

The News of the Church

Pledge Envelopes: Several people have asked about receiving their pledge envelopes. While they have been ordered, they have not yet arrived. We're not sure why but have been told that it may be another 2 or even 3 weeks. Thank you for your patience!

If you have NOT yet pledged, please remember to make your pledge this week. If you lost your pledge card or never got one, FEAR NOT! You can get one from the parish office or by asking Fr. Chuck or one of the Vestry members.

Directory: We are planning a new "in house" parish directory. What that means is, we will produce it ourselves. There are three things we would like you to do to make sure it is the best directory we can produce. PLEASE NOTE: This is for parishioners only.

1. Please contact the office with your correct information: Name(s), address, phone(s), e-mail(s).
2. Please let us know what information is okay to publish (all, some, none)

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3. Please e-mail us a photo if possible. We would like it to be a photo directory, especially so newer parishioners can more easily be identified and learn the parish membership more easily

Announcement of Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of St. James' Church will be held Sunday, January 25, 2015. The meeting will begin with a joint Eucharist at 9:00 AM. Voting will start at the beginning of the service and continue through to the start of the business portion of the meeting. According to New York state law and church canon, you must be at least 18 and a contributing member of record in order to be eligible to vote. At this meeting, we will elect new Vestry member and bestow the St. James' Medal.

Outreach Meeting and Search for New Chair: There will be an Outreach Meeting on Wednesday, January 14 in the Wilks Room at 7:00 pm. We encourage all committee members to be there, as this will be Deb Belding's final meeting as the chair. One important topic of discussion will be the next committee chair. This meeting is open to all - and we especially welcome anyone who is interested in learning more about Outreach at St. James'!

Indaba Coming to St. James' This Month: We have spoken about Indaba often, but now it will become very real for us. The teams from St. Mary's, Manhattanville (in Harlem) and St. John's, New Rochelle will be visiting St. James' on January 21-February 1. We almost have enough beds for our guests - just one or two more are needed. Anyway able to step up that weekend? Thanks!

Also, please pray for our team over the course of the Indaba process. It lasts several months and requires true dedication. On the other hand, it's very exciting and rewarding - and it will help the whole church in the long run.

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Ashley Coyne, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Liz Handman, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Dalton K., Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Doris Mack, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Pat Rooney, John Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Slight, Debbie Stone, Tracy, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Bobbie Wells, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

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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, Sanjanah Shahani and Andrew Glancey
Birthdays (next week):	Ryan Seagren, Christopher Granados-Kramer, Kendall Whitman and Jodi Triola
Acolytes:	January 11: Nancy, Kirsten and Deirdre Mae January 18: Russell, John Beyer and Anna
Altar Guild:	January 11: Team Number I January 18: Team Number II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 11: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden January 18: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	January 11: Russell Urban Mead/Nancy Montero January 18: Wilma Tully/ Sophie Ciferri
Ushers:	January 11: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe January 18: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	January 11: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown January 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 11: Angela Henry and Susan Heupler January 18: Dee and Jake Hill
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 11: The Eames, Jodi Triola and Pat Rooney January 18: Deirdre Mae Micker

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This Week's Lectionary

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

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 4, 2015)

"Rough Road Home"

Yesterday, I attended the funeral of Deacon Vivian Seipp, who is the mother of Val Gaulin and Jodi Triola. The funeral was a beautiful celebration of her long ministry even as tears were shed in the sadness of missing her. But even more, there was a joy that she was now home with God in a way that we can only dream of in our present lives.

She has gone home.

As I say, it was a very good funeral right up to the time of the reception. Someone looked out the window and said, "It's snowing!" And it did not stop. Before long, everyone was slipping away to beat the bad road conditions.

It was too late. By the time I got out of the parking lot, my car was sliding all over the road - and so was everyone else's. It was a horrible ride up Route 9 - there was probably an accident every mile-and-a-half or so, and I kept praying, "Please let me get home safely."

The irony is that today's stories in the scriptures are all about going the rough road home.

Our Old Testament reading from Jeremiah talks of the years of slavery the Israelites spent, and their journey home. He says they are walking with tears of joy in their eyes, that they will finally know peace.

The psalm talks about how we are not really home. It speaks of longing to be home with God. The psalmist writes, "For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked."

But the story that perhaps speaks to the rough road home the best is the Gospel. To understand, it's best to look at how Matthew is different from the other Gospels. You know that only two of the Gospels - Matthew and Luke - have a birth story for Jesus. But whereas Luke has the whole

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census, and journey down to Bethlehem, and no room at the inn, and the manger in the stable, Matthew has none of that.

For Matthew, they're already in Bethlehem. They live there. It's only when Mary gets pregnant that things get strange. Joseph has a dream in which God says not to divorce her. Then after the Magi come to adore the infant Jesus, they have a dream warning them not to return home via King Herod - because Herod wants to kill Jesus. So they flee in secret.

After that, Joseph has another dream telling him to flee to Egypt - to become a refugee - so Herod can't kill Jesus. And finally, after Herod dies, Joseph has yet another dream telling him to avoid Bethlehem and go to Nazareth in Galilee because Archlaeus is now in charge and no less threat to Jesus. They have to find a new home.

Why does Matthew tell the story this way?

I mean, Luke didn't have Jesus run away. The only thing that happens to Jesus after his birth in Luke is that the baby grows into a 12-year-old boy who drives his parents crazy.

But for Matthew, this homeless quality, this exile, is important. Why? First, because for Matthew, fulfilling prophecy or fulfilling scripture is essential. He wants to make the connection between Christ and the ancient Jewish religion. It's not just a new-fangled philosophy but the fulfillment of God's promise.

But there may be another reason Matthew makes the road home so rough for Jesus. The Gospels tell us that Jesus came to be one of us, to live as us and dies as us. But we all know the road we travel is hard.

There are accidents and sickness, poverty and injustice. There's slaughter of innocents, war, crime - and on a more mundane level, there are jobs, unemployment, deadlines and bills to pay. It's hard.

If Jesus is to be the one who walks with us, he has to know its difficulty and pain from the beginning.

For Matthew, then, we are all on the same road. And that road ultimately leads home to God. As hard as it is, we know that we never walk alone. Jesus has walked it with us. And even if we can't see him, we walk together, you and I. We are traveling companions. We follow the path of Jesus, we hear the dreams of God, and we know the promise that no matter how rough the road, it will lead us home, and when we get there, we will know that it is our home. Forever. Amen.



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*The primary focus of ministry of the Taizé Community is towards youth and young adults; therefore, only a limited number of participants over twenty-nine years of age can be accepted