

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

There was a movie back in 1979 called Being There. It was the last movie of Peter Sellers (the original Inspector Clouseau of Pink Panther fame).

This movie was about a simple-minded gardener who, just by being present managed to shape situations of international significance. In the process, without trying to, he convinced the world's power brokers that he not only possessed a brilliant intellect, but also unfathomable spiritual authenticity. They saw in him what they longed for in their souls.

Maybe I liked the movie so much because his character never actually did anything. He never asked for anything or tried to be anything more than what he was. He simply was there.

I think about this movie now and then when things start getting overly busy. I think about it when all the Fall's activities kick into high gear, when all the regional and diocesan meetings take place and I start to compare myself with other priests - or our parish with large congregations. When I start comparing, I begin to feel miserable, as if I'm not doing enough and must do more, more, more!

But then, this simple gardener comes to mind, and I realize that sometimes, just being there is enough. Just being present is all it takes to shape other peoples' lives in ways we can't begin to understand. Just being here makes all the difference.

More than once, people have come to me and said they feel guilty coming to church because they can't contribute more money or more work on committees or other ministries. I tell them what I have to remind myself all the time: Sometimes, just being there is enough.

If you feel like you're not "pulling your weight" in church and maybe you don't have a right to come, let me put your mind at ease. Your presence here - just sitting in the pew - can be more powerful than money or action. You never know who is going to be changed when they sit down next to you in church.

If you've never seen the movie, I recommend it. Yes, it has a kind of "late 70s" vibe, but it also has something universal, even holy about it. And it's that holiness of just being there, that I would love to see everyone here embrace.

In Christ,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

The News of the Diocese

Regional Council: This Saturday, delegates from St. James' will attend the Mid-Hudson Region's Regional Council, a meeting of the churches in the northern third of the diocese. We will share the work of the various churches as well as discuss the grant proposals that have been made to the regional executive committee this year. In one portion of the day, performers from various churches will share some of their "talent." Our own Paul O'Halloran will perform his monologue from the graveyard tour. Thanks, Paul!

Election of a Bishop: December 7 will be the day that we elect a suffragan bishop for the diocese. You can meet the candidates at one of several "Walkabouts" throughout the diocese. The first Walkabout is at Trinity Church, Fishkill on Tuesday, November 12 at 1 PM. There is another that evening The Church of St. James the Less, Scarsdale.

Most of the other meetings are in or near New York City - if you want a list of them, please contact Fr. Chuck. However, on November 13 at 7:00 PM, the Walkabout at Trinity Wall Street, Manhattan will be live streamed, so you can watch and participate (via Twitter, Facebook or e-mail) through your computer.

For more information on the election process, please visit www.suffraganny.org where all updates will be posted.

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a bishop for this Diocese, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Habitat for Humanity - Home Dedication: There is going to be a celebration in Poughkeepsie on Friday, November 1st at 12:00 Noon at 113 Thompson Street. This special gathering is to celebrate the end of a Habitat Build and the volunteers who made this possible for the homeowner.

Another Habitat Build is being planned by the faith community in Dutchess County for 2014 - 2015. This gathering on November 1st is a wonderful opportunity to come together in thanksgiving for what has transpired and at the same time provide an opportunity to look at what can happen when our faith community comes together to do a Habitat Build.

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

If you are available, please come to give thanks for this Habitat Build and to discover the possibilities for another Habitat Build in Dutchess County.

Peace,
Deacon Gail

The News of the Church

Churchyard Offering Thanks: Many thanks to those who have already sent in checks for the special Churchyard offering. Already, your generosity has been tremendous and heartwarming. This money will help improve our beautiful churchyard and help keep it maintained. If you are still preparing to send in your donation, may we make a request? In order to simplify bookkeeping, we would appreciate it if you wrote: "St. James' Church" on the "To:" line. Then, on the memo line write: "Friends of St. James' Churchyard." Thank you!

Wanted: Graveyard Tour Pictures: Did you attend the Graveyard Tour? Enjoy it? Take pictures? We would love to have your digital pictures in order to create a slide show that we can present to the congregation and use for promotional purposes (e.g., put it on the website). If you have photos you're willing to share, please contact Paul O'Halloran at paulo56@me.com.

Stewardship Letter Coming: In the coming days, you will receive your Stewardship letter. In it, you will find not only an invitation to be part of the life of the church, but a pledge card.

Please consider your pledge with prayer. Ask God and listen for guidance.

Ingathering Sunday will be November 6, and we would very much love to have everyone's pledge in by then. Thank you!

Acolyte Training Coming: If you are 9 years old or older, we want YOU to become an acolyte! All you have to do is see Fr. Chuck, and he will arrange for training. A date for the next training session will be announced next week.

Book Group Start Date Announced: The "Prayer For Owen Meany" book group will have its first meeting on Thursday, November 14. Don't worry if you haven't finished the book by

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

then - we'll work through it together. If you've already finished it and are anxious to get started, thank you for your patience!

Inquirers Classes: Every other Fall, the bishop comes to St. James' for confirmations, receptions and reaffirmations of faith. Our next visit will be in either November or December 2014. Now is the time to start thinking about being confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. Classes take quite a lot of time and commitment, so consider well if you want to put in the work required.

You must be at least 13 at the beginning of classes, and anyone under 16 has to come to me personally to explain why they feel called to confirmation.

Advent Retreat: Mark December 21 on your calendars for a special Advent Day of Reflection. Fr. Masud ibn Syedullah will host "Joy is at Hand!", which takes place at our chapel. More information and a brochure will follow in the coming weeks.

Outreach: On behalf of Outreach, I would like to thank Deirdre Mae Micker and Christina Wardell for co-chairing the very successful Tea Room this past Saturday. Once again, the Wilks Room was beautifully converted for the day into a charming spot to sit down for a "spot of tea" and either a sweet or savory treat. Also, thanks to Sue DeLorenzo, Patty Caswell, Wilma Tully, Pat Holland, Lynne Koch, Paul Littlefield, Skylar Wardell, Shirley Ferris, Leslie Quick, Anna Marie Pitcher, Ann Dingee, Saira, Jeet and Sanjana Shahani and Thomas and Charlotte Finnegan for all of your hard work. If I missed anyone, my apologies!

In addition, I would like to thank Wendy Urban-Mead and her volunteers for cooking for this month's meal at Hillcrest House.

--Deb Catalano

Harvest Dinner: Mark your calendars for November 1st for the delicious Roast Pork dinner fundraiser for the Hyde Park Community Garden. On the menu will be Roast Pork and Potatoes with Gravy, Seasonal Vegetable medley of Broccoli, Cauliflower and Baby Carrots, Braised Red Cabbage, Whipped Butternut Squash, Salad, Rolls, Fruit Cobblers with fresh whipped cream for dessert, apple cider, coffee and tea. All served family style. Prices are \$15 for adults, \$10 for children 10-18, children under 10 free.

Two seatings, 5:30 and 7:00. Call Dyan at the Parish Office to make your reservations. Students from the Culinary Institute will be helping prepare, serve and clean up. Also,

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

members of our congregation as well as FDR National Honor Students will lend a hand. Should be a wonderful night! Please see the flyer attached at the end of this E-pistle.

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kurt Burkhardt, George Buso, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Jack Gordy, Harold Hall, Jolanda Heijenbrok, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Nancy Nucci, 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

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:	Bev Tas, Grant Ferris, Lee Zajkowski, Grace Cole, Rebecca Foote and Dyan Wapnick
Acolytes:	October 27: Team I November 3: Team II
Altar Guild:	October 27: Team Number III November 3: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	October 27: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris November 3: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	October 27: Wilma Tully/Bobbie Wells November 3: Patty Caswell/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	October 27: Bobbie and Cliff Wells November 3: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	October 27: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell November 3: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
Coffee Hour Hosts:	October 27: Audrey Horne November 3: Saira Shahani

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

This Week's Lectionary

Sirach 35:12-17

Psalm 84:1-6

2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Sermon Preached on
Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
(October 20)

"Limping Home"

If you've got your bulletins, do me a favor and take out a pen or pencil and go to the sermon title. Scratch out "to the finish line" and write in "Home." The other title sounds too much like a foot race, and I don't run unless I'm being chased by zombies.

Also, it makes it sound like life is a competition, as if we were out to beat each other, and that's just not the case. I know, sometimes sports metaphors are used in scripture. Saint Paul loved to talk about fighting the good fight or running the race with endurance... And of course, you've got wrestling in today's old testament reading.

But Jesus did not describe life the same way. You never see him talking about beating the other guy or going for first prize. You'll never hear him say second place is just first loser.

So, when I changed the sermon title to "Limping Home," I'm not talking about baseball. I'm talking about home; both our houses and our eternal homes.

But why limping?

Well, obviously, there's the story of Jacob we read just now. He's returning home after twenty years in exile. Remember how he had tricked his brother Esau out of their father's blessing when it looked like he was going to die. Esau was ready to kill Jacob in revenge, so Jacob fled. Now he's returning with a large family and large herds. But he's afraid because he just received word that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men.

He divides up the camp so that if one group is destroyed, another can escape, and then he sends them on ahead of him. Now he's all alone. A man shows up and, for no reason whatsoever begins to wrestle with Jacob. They wrestle all night long - and finally the unnamed man throws Jacob's hip out of joint. In their ensuing conversation, it becomes clear to Jacob that it is God he's been wrestling with.

There's no winner or loser in this wrestling - did you notice? Jacob gets a blessing out of the experience - and a limp. But he is satisfied that he will live.

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

But what is that wrestling about? Well, I bet you know what it's like to wrestle with God. That's where you struggle with those big issues that keep you up at night. Why am I here? Why is this happening to me? How am I going to get out of this? What is the right thing to do? (Why are the Rangers so bad?)

Jacob was faced with a real life or death issue - God had told him to return home, and he's faced with possible annihilation. What should he do? In his struggle, he figured out something. God didn't tell him to run away but to face life. Maybe that limp is a sign that he can't run away - he'd never get away anyway. All he can do is limp home, come what may. Not thoughtlessly but with a confidence that whatever was to come, God would be with him.

However, this insight cost him. He walks away from the encounter with a limp, possibly a permanent limp, though we never find out. All we know is that when Jacob finally gets home, he's limping home.

As I said, most of us know what it feels like to wrestle with God at least a little. It's hard and confusing and - like Jacob - it often feels like a stalemate. There's never a winner. You go round and round and round.

Sometimes, you get moments of insight, too. You see God at work. You understand that God will never leave you. You realize that running away from life will never bring you home - that the only way home is by facing life head on. These insights cost us, too. I don't know about you, but quite often, I feel like I'm limping - definitely not winning any races and maybe just barely making it.

Now, I haven't mentioned the other lessons today yet, but both Saint Pau and Jesus have something to add to Jacob's wrestling.

Paul is writing to Timothy again, and he says to be persistent whether things are favorable or not. Just keep going, doing what you believe is right, moving in the direction God is calling you regardless of how hopeless things look. Yes, question yourself - question whether you understand God's will correctly, but don't let difficulty and pain stop you. Faith is just putting one limping foot in front of the other even when it seems pointless.

Jesus gives a similar lesson. Remembering that widows in those days were among the weakest people in terms of rights, we have the story of a widow who is seeking justice. We don't know what the injustice done to her is, nor does it matter. What matters is that she is small and weak and seeking help from a big and powerful authority that doesn't care about her. It's hopeless; she has no chance. Yet she keeps pestering him, keeps seeking justice. And eventually, the judge gives in just to get her off his back.

I've long had a problem with this passage because it makes it sound as if all you have to do is pester God long enough, and He'll give you what you want. As if we were spoiled kids at the store saying, "I want it, I want it, I want it," until God gives in and gives you health or wealth or whatever you're after.

That's not it. Life is no more a shopping spree than it is a game or race to win. It is life. It is our journey home to God. And in order to get home, it requires going through rough territory.

St. James' E-pistle

October 25, 2013

It requires facing injustice - both that we suffer and, yes, that we impose on others. It requires struggling with who we are and why we are here and why things happen.

It requires letting go of whether others think you're in a losing cause. Christ does not call us to win - whether it be a race or an argument - Christ only calls us to follow him. To keep following no matter how hard it is, no matter how pointless it seems, no matter how much we're limping and feel beat up by life. Just keep following, and he will get us home. Amen.