

St. James' E-pistle

October 31, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Someone posted an interesting image on Facebook this week. It is a black page with white words which say: "Black Friday: Because only in America do people trample each other for sales exactly one day after giving thanks for what they already have."

It's a little bit snarky, but it does point to a real disconnect between what we say and what we do. We say that we are thankful for God's abundance. We want to believe it.

But we don't.

We believe that we won't get that Teenage Mutant Ninja action figure, or Elsa or the Minion. Or we worry we won't get the new iPhone 6 or the Rolling Foot Massager with Infrared Heat.

Of course, why limit it to Christmas shopping. We worry we don't have enough all the time. Enough money, enough clothes, enough hours at work - pick your poison. We worry we don't have enough.

Which is why I urge you to come to church this Sunday.

This Sunday is a twofer of significance for our spiritual lives.

First, it is All Saints Sunday. It is the day we celebrate our abundance of blessings by being part of the community of saints. We feel ourselves embraced not only by our brothers and sisters in the pews but by the larger community through the ages. We know their ongoing love and support for us even as they enjoy their rest from the cares of this world.

We are concluding the Graveyard Tours this week - and they were all about celebrating the relationship between us and those who went before. Their heritage is rich, but even more important are their stories, the lessons we learn from their efforts to follow Christ.

Having this ongoing, eternal relationship makes us immeasurably rich, and it helps us look beyond ourselves to the world around us - which is also our family.

Second, this Sunday is Ingathering Sunday when we bring our pledge cards to church, offer them up and bless them to God's service. In a way, it's a tired old tradition, doing the same thing year after year. Why, it's almost like singing Christmas carols or Happy Birthday, or giving flowers to Mom on Mothers' Day.

Only, Ingathering Sunday is more than just a tradition. It's where we give thanks to God for our bounty and promise to be good stewards of it. It's where we step up and "You've given me

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this incredible gift, and it would such a shame not to share it." Whether that's money or a skill or talent or your time, what God gives to you is meant to be used...and shared.

It seems so right that these two events - All Saints and Ingathering Sunday - should happen together, because the community of God is one of God's greatest gifts. And it is a place where we can practice stewardship of our other gifts, always recognizing that they come from God and are meant to serve God's Kingdom.

So I urge you to join us Sunday - let us celebrate together the good stewardship of God's gifts, past, present and future.

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.diocesenyn.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

2 On the feast day for the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed we pray for all who mourn, and pray that their grief may be turned to joy.

3 All deacons of this diocese who have died, may they rest in peace.

4 All priests of this diocese who have died, may they rest in peace.

5 All bishops of this diocese who have died, may they rest in peace.

6 St. Luke's Chapel (St. Martin's Parish), Manhattan

7 The Church of the Good Shepherd, The Bronx

8 St. Joseph's Church, The Bronx

STILL PRAYING:

Most of the Nigerian girls kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram are still in bondage. Please consider this prayer in your daily devotions.

Prayer for the kidnapped Nigerian girls May 2014

O God, we cry out to you
for the lives and the freedom
of the 276 kidnapped girls in Nigeria.
In their time of danger and fear,
pour out your strong Spirit for them.
Make a way home for them in safety.
Make a way back for them
to the education that will lift them up.
Hold them in the knowledge
that they are not captive slaves,
they are not purchased brides,
but they are your beloved daughters,
and precious in your sight.
Change the hearts and minds of their kidnappers
and of all who choose violence against women and girls.
Cast down the mighty from their seat,
and lift up the humble and meek,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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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.

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.

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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)

The News of the Church



Time Change:

You get an extra hour of sleep this Sunday! Remember to set your clocks **BACK** one hour Saturday night (from 2:00 AM to 1:00 AM). But don't worry if you show up an hour early. We can always go out for a cup of coffee.

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Graveyard Tours Videos: Thanks to the hard work, generosity and artistry of Brian Rance, we now have several videos of the Graveyard Tours. There are 50 DVDs for distribution to each family in the parish. Each DVD contains two nights of performances. The DVDs are great for showing to your friends and family when they visit this Thanksgiving!

If you would like a DVD, please let Fr. Chuck know
OR

You can simply watch on YouTube:

The October 18th Tour can be found by clicking on the following link
(or pasting this address into your web browser):

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgErYajv6z1nZOKsg4djhywh_NnS-Gi7M

The October 25th Tour can be found at this address:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgErYajv6z1keCPb_hT51U8YcNnzWXxYG

There are some different actors each night, so performances will vary.

Work On Shed Begins: Peek around the back of the rectory, and you'll see work has begun renovating the shed. This shed is very old and in bad shape. We were going to have to either repair it or take it down, but thanks to a generous donation, we are able to fix it up!



Adult Acolytes Wanted: Without wanting to sound alarmist, we are in the midst of an acolyte predicament. We don't have many. With graduations, crazy schedules and moves, we are down to six acolytes, one of whom has a broken arm and can't serve at the moment. That does not mean we have to go without acolytes. Adults can step forward, too! We already have *one* adult acolyte currently serving, and others have served in the past. Perhaps YOU can consider becoming an acolyte! It's fun, gets you close to the action, and allows you to serve God in a new way. All you need to do is contact Fr. Chuck. Hope to see you robed up

and ready to serve soon.

Outreach Meeting: The next meeting will be in the Parish Hall at 7:00 p.m. on November 5th.

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**The Final
Graveyard Tour
Tonight!** This is it.
Friday, October 31
is the final night of
this year's
Graveyard Tours.

If you have not
seen the tours yet,
this is your last
chance! PLEASE
PLEASE PLEASE
order your tickets
online now!

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month:

Surveys indicate that 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Domestic Violence is a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult over another in an intimate relationship. It is not "marital conflict," "mutual abuse," "a lovers' quarrel," or "a private family matter." Domestic Violence may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Eighty-five percent of domestic violence victims are women, although men may also be victims. It happens in every congregation or mosque. Regardless of who is being victimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS...

PHYSICAL ASSAULT: Includes shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Any time one partner forces sexual acts that are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSAULT: Includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, and control over the partner's activities.

ATTACKS AGAINST PROPERTY AND PETS: Destruction of property, household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, or abusing or killing beloved pets.

WHY DOES SHE STAY?

She stays because she is terrified that he will become more violent if she leaves, that he will try to take the children, and that she can't make it on her own.

I AM AFRAID AND NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-7233 (24 hours)

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

WHAT CAN I DO TO BE HELPFUL IF AN ABUSIVE SITUATION IS REVEALED?

- **Listen to the woman and believe her.** Tell her that the abuse is not her fault and this is not God's will for her.
- **Refer her only** to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help her find a shelter, safe home or advocacy resources to offer her protection.
- **Hold the abuser accountable.** Don't minimize his abusive behavior. Support him in seeking specialized batterers' counseling to help change his behavior. Continue to hold him accountable and to support and protect the victim even after he has begun a counseling program.
- **Restoration of the relationship can be considered** only after the above steps have taken place.

Religious teachings can serve either as a roadblock or a resource. There is nothing in Christian, Jewish or Muslim teachings that can rightly be used to justify abuse. However, there are teachings that can be misused and distorted to suggest that domestic violence may be acceptable, or even God's will. As religious communities, our mandate is to minimize any roadblocks facing victims and to maximize the resources that exist within our religious traditions.

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Ashley Coyne, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Andy Hall, 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 Sleight, Debbie Stone, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Bobbie Wells, 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):	Andy Hall, Mike Fenwick, Sue Fenwick and Sophie Ciferri
Birthdays (next week):	Anna Mae Swenson, Sue DeLorenzo, Michael Mungo, August (Bud) Oetjen, Florence Fried, Riley Hall and Gwen Cookingham
Acolytes:	November 2: Jasmine Thatcher, Charlie Urban-Mead and Jaylen Thatcher November 9: Nancy Montero and Chris Santos
Altar Guild:	November 2: Team III November 9: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	November 2: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch November 9: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	November 2: Patty Caswell/Deirdre Mae Micker November 9: Regina Ardini/Sophie Ciferri
Ushers:	November 2: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne November 9: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	November 2: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown

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November 9: Deb and Doug Belding

Parish Cycle of Prayer: November 2: Judy Douglass, Charlotte DeGroff and Dottie and Patty Drake

November 9: Connie and Ross Eames, Sylvia Erlandson and Ann and Ray Farrell

Coffee Hour Hosts: November 2: Audrey Horne and Saira Shahani

November 9: Jodi Triola, The Eames and Pat Rooney

This Week's Lectionary

Revelation 7:9-17

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12

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

Sermon Preached on
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
(October 26, 2014)

"When Almost is Enough"

Did you ever hear that phrase "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades?" Or how about "Close but no cigar?" When I was a kid, it took me awhile to figure out what they meant, in part because I had never played horseshoes, never thrown a hand grenade and didn't smoke a cigar.

But I eventually got it. What they were saying was, "Almost doing something is not enough." Almost winning a game still makes you a loser. Almost passing a test still means you failed. We don't like to hear, "Almost," and for good reason.

Who wants to get a call from a relative saying, "I almost made it to your house for a visit, but then I got lost (or got a flat tire or whatever)"? Or the recurring nightmare I had as a teenager in which I got to heaven's gates only to Saint Peter look in the book and say, "Sorry, you weren't quite good enough. Almost, but...."

But there are times when Almost is enough.

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You don't have to win the prize, as it were, to live well, to love well, to do good. In fact, there are times when the great can be the enemy of the good, and the striving to have it all just right drowns out the real purpose of life.

And you know the real purpose of life - to love. Or at least to learn how to love in an environment where it isn't easy. I'm not talking about Hallmark squishy kind of love. It's not Romance, it's our job. It's a command given by Jesus.

You know the summary of the law. Come on, say it with me. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: `You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

I make the Confirmation class memorize it because it's who we are. Love is our identity, and it means hard stuff.

It means to put up with each other, to support each other, to rejoice and hold and, feed and, well love. To yell, cry, laugh - all those things - and know that we will still claim each other. To love someone - whether you really know them or not - means to work for their best interests even when you can't stand them.

How about an example.

You don't usually think of Moses as a warm & cuddly guy, but he loved God, and he loved the Hebrew people who followed him in the wilderness. Frustrated as he was with them much of the time, he loved them.

Which makes it seem sad that God did not allow Moses to enter the promised land. I mean, he was almost there. He could see it!

But for Moses, ALMOST entering the holy land was enough. He did not have to actually enter to make his life complete. Almost was enough.

It was enough because even though HE did not finish the job God had given him, he had gotten it far enough that Joshua could take over and get them across the Jordan.

And let's face it, none of us ever really finishes the tasks God gives us. We never give of ourselves completely. We never forgive quite enough. We never work quite hard enough for justice. Almost enough, perhaps.

Fortunately, almost is enough. Even when it come to our main purpose in life, learning how to love.

Almost loving is even good enough because sometimes that's the best we can do. God knows this. But God loves us completely.

What God doesn't take so kindly to is the trickery, the hatred, the using of another as a tool or pawn. Not that there isn't forgiveness even for the Pharisees of the world because I believe God's grace and mercy is much broader, much deeper than we can begin to grasp. But I can say that such treatment of others is not what the Kingdom of God is made of.

I used to spend time worrying about whether I was good enough to get to heaven, always afraid of that "Almost" at the pearly gates. Only then I realized that God says to us right now, every day, and in the end, "Almost is enough. Welcome home." Amen.