

St. James' E-pistle

November 1, 2013

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Happy Hallowmas! No, I'm not making fun of the Christmas decorations in the store before Halloween is even over. Hallowmas is a real thing.

Actually, it's called the Triduum of All Hallows or the Triduum of All Saints. A Triduum is a three-day period of prayer. The Triduum of All Hallows includes All Hallows Eve (AKA Halloween), All Hallows Day (All Saints) and All Souls Day.

On Halloween, we hold vigil in preparation for All Saints - the day when we commemorate the saints who have gone before us. The word "saint" itself is open for debate. In some traditions, the saints are those who were close associates of Christ's in scripture plus those who over the centuries have been accorded special honor by the church (think St. Francis).

The Feast of All Souls, which takes place the next day, remembers all faithful people, especially loved ones who have died and await the resurrection.

In other traditions, all faithful people are saints because we all belong to the household of God. They don't bother with All Souls Day because it's redundant.

In our tradition, though, we have both. Unlike Roman Catholics, we don't have a canonization process dependent on miracles. We simply hold up people whose lives of faith were so exemplary that we feel we can gain in our own spiritual journeys much by studying their lives. We loosely call them saints and give them special attention on All Saints even though we acknowledge the membership of all faithful departed in the communion of saints.

I hope you will use this Triduum of All Hallows to pray for those who have gone before - those who gave their lives for Christ so completely that we strive to emulate them, and those who just lived normal lives of faith, but lives that touched many with their love. All are integral parts of the fabric of life, all flowers in a vast field. All are worth remembering and appreciating.

So Happy Hallowmas!

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Diocese

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 Suffragan for our Diocese, and those who offer themselves as candidates: Kim, Kathleen, Susan, Allen, Mauricio, and Patrick. We pray 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 today, 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.

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

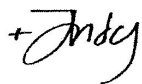
Bishop's Statement on NY Casino Gambling: The Bishop of New York, the Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche, has issued the following statement in opposition to NY Proposal 1,

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whereby NY voters on November 5 will be asked to approve the authorization of up to 7 casinos in the state.

"On November 5th, New York voters will be presented with Proposal 1, the New York Casino Gambling Amendment, which would allow the legislature to authorize up to seven new casinos in the state. The stated purposes of this constitutional amendment are to promote job growth, increase funding to schools, and permit local governments to lower property taxes. These are more than reasonable goals, but what is not said is that in places where casino gambling has been introduced, almost all gains have come at the high social cost of addiction and family disintegration, and deepening poverty. Some of these casinos are targeted for regions in New York, including in our diocese, characterized by entrenched poverty. The infusion of such false hopes into communities of economic desperation will, we are convinced, prove ruinous to people and families who will turn to the empty promises of casino gambling. There are no quick fixes to the challenges of struggling cities and towns, and we call on our elected leaders instead to focus on the kind of investment and hard work that build sound, long-term economic health and the self-sufficiency of communities. The Episcopal Church has long opposed casino gambling for all of these reasons, and so we stand in opposition to Proposal 1."



The Right Reverend Andrew M. L. Dietsche, Bishop of New York

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.

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Stewardship Letter: You should have recently received, or will soon 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 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.

Harvest Dinner: Remember that tonight, November 1st, is the delicious Roast Pork dinner fundraiser for the Hyde Park Community Garden.

Happy Birthday, Anna Mae! Sunday, November 3, Anna Mae Swenson turns 105! Please lift her up in your prayers this week and wish her many happy returns!

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Fall Back: Please remember to set your clocks BACK one hour Saturday night.

Fall Concert Series Sunday Nov. 17 at the Chapel at 3:00: Betty and the Baby Boomers. The name seemed like a good idea twenty years ago when Betty Boomer, Jean Valla McAvoy, Paul Rubeo, and Steve Stanne began performing together—a play on Betty's name and the fact that all four are children of the baby boom generation. The name is now known to folk music fans from the mountains of Connemara in Ireland to the Catskills overlooking the Hudson Valley. In addition to original songs from Jean, the Boomers (now including bass player Robert Bard) draw on sources including traditional folk, contemporary artists like Bruce Cockburn and Dougie MacClean, and classic "folksingers" like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Phil Ochs.

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:	Andy Hall, Mike Fenwick, Sue Fenwick, Sophie Ciferri and Anna Mae Swenson
Acolytes:	November 3: Team II November 10: Team III
Altar Guild:	November 3: Team Number I November 10: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	November 3: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch

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10 a.m. Readers:	November 10: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo November 3: Patty Caswell/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	November 10: Russell Urban-Mead/Sophie Ciferri November 3: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	November 10: Donna and John Beyer November 3: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
Coffee Hour Hosts:	November 10: Deb and Doug Belding November 3: Saira Shahani November 10: Jodi Triola and The Eames

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 1:10-18

Psalm 32:1-8

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Luke 19:1-10

Sermon Preached on
Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost
(October 27)

"Looking Up From the Bottom"

The other day, Liz and I were driving down Route 9, and I noticed a house being painted. I said, "They're painting that house wrong."

She said, "I'm driving and can't look. What's wrong with it."

I said, "They're painting it from the bottom up." Everybody knows you paint a house from the top down. That way, if paint drips, it only hits siding that's going to get covered later on anyway.

She said, "What if they're putting vinyl siding on and aren't painting it at all."

I said, "Oh."

In other words, there are times when working from the bottom up makes the most sense. With siding, for example, you have to have the lower panels on first so the upper panels can overlap. Or when you're building a house - without the foundation, you have nothing.

Our Gospel today suggests that when you're building your spiritual home, it's best to start from the bottom.

This is one of the perhaps less known parables Jesus tells. Two men go into the temple to pray. One starts off by comparing himself to others, you know, thieves, rogues, adulterers and tax

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collectors. Essentially the most unappealing people he could think of. Then he begins ticking off his good points.

Now, you might say the Pharisee who prays like this is arrogant and self-confident, but I wonder. It's my experience that at least sometimes, people who spend all their time enumerating their good qualities are a bit UNSure of themselves. I mean, why bother telling God what you're doing unless you think that's going to bolster your case for a ticket to heaven? He's building his resume.

Maybe the saddest thing about the Pharisee isn't what he thinks about himself - it's what he thinks about God. Not only does he apparently believe that he has to keep a list of his achievements to please God. Worse, he seems to believe that God only has enough room in his heart for a limited number of people - as if it were a competition to win God's love. Why else would he bother comparing himself to the tax collector? By saying, "At least I'm not as bad as him," he's throwing the tax collector under the bus - or I suppose the chariot - so that he, the Pharisee, will have a spot on the soul train. You know that old joke about the hunters who encounter a bear - the bear charges and one of the hunters yells "Run!" The other says, "We'll never be able to outrun a bear!" The first one says, "I don't have to - I just have to outrun you." He's operating as if God were a bear.

As if God couldn't accommodate everybody God ever made. As if there were not room for all. That Pharisee is operating out of a fear so deep, he has no idea it's there. But it's a fear all the same, and it's poison to the soul.

The tax collector, on the other hand, doesn't bother to compare himself to anybody. He's at the bottom already. Who could he compare himself with? He doesn't even bother to list his sins. What would be the point? God knows everything, right? The tax collector's probably smart enough to know that when we people start mentioning the BAD things we do in life, we're a little forgetful. So why even bother listen them? After awhile, the NUMBER is meaningless - if God's counting, if entry into heaven depends on our good deeds being weighed against our faults - well, he knows he's doomed already.

All he has left is trust in God's mercy. Mercy - God knowing us fully, completely, warts, sins, crimes, perversions and all - and still welcoming us into his all-loving embrace.

When Jesus asks the disciples which of the two is justified, he's not asking which one is better. He's asking which one is ready to let God pick them up and hold them tight. It's the one who cannot compare, who doesn't bother looking at his own deeds, who can only look up at God and say, "Have mercy on me."

There is a prayer known as "The Jesus Prayer." It first got that name around the fifth century and was known among the desert fathers. It's widely practiced in the Eastern Orthodox Church and was made popular in the west in the 14th Century through a little book called The Cloud of Unknowing. Here's how the prayer goes:

“Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

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The orthodox consider this to be one of the purest prayers. It says everything. Jesus is God's son, our Lord. We are sinners who can do nothing divine on our own. It is through God's mercy that we are saved. I would like you to say it with me: Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

This is an important prayer for us to remember in the church. As stewardship time comes about, and we ask you to give of yourself to make yourself part of this wondrous experiment in love, some might feel compelled to compare what they give with others - to make sure they're giving more, you know? Some might feel that they don't deserve to even be here because they can't give enough.

While it is true that the Old Testament reading says, "Give to the Most High as He has given to you, and as generously as you can afford," our giving is not a competition. It will not earn us points with God or move us ahead of others. If you can give - give from your heart. If all you can give is your presence and your heart, it is enough.

We give because we want to be part of this community where we can be our true selves, where we are invited week after week NOT to look around at what others are doing but up to God, where we can let go of the need to succeed and simply trust in his mercy. Regardless of who we are or what we give, it is trust in his mercy that leads us home. Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.