

# St. James' E-pistle

## November 28, 2014

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This week you get two messages. One - this one - is all about Advent.

The second, at the end of this E-pistle - is about the grand jury decision in Ferguson and the rioting that followed. I felt it deserved a message, especially since some have asked me what my thoughts are. There are many other thoughtful, prayerful reflections, including those of our Bishop and Presiding Bishop, not to mention the Bishop of Missouri. If you choose not to read this reflection, that's fine. Just pray for all concerned that they may seek the reconciliation Christ desires for all God's children.

But now... Advent.

Advent is our New Year. It is the beginning of everything for us. The birth of Christ begins with the season of preparation, and we are meant to prepare more than just the trees, presents, parties and cards. We are meant to prepare ourselves.

But how? And why?

Well, first the why. Yesterday on Thanksgiving, we sat around doing something we never do: We watched football. Though I'm no fan, I did have to acknowledge that those players are good. They are strong, they are smart - let's face it, the game is complicated - and they are well trained. In short, they are prepared for whatever comes their way. Whether they win or lose, their preparation ensures that the game will be competitive and entertaining for the crowds. The same can be said of actors, musicians and so on. Or of teachers, doctors, business people and so on. If you are prepared, you do better. Reliably.

So it makes sense for us to prepare ourselves for Christ's coming. By that, I mean Christ coming and coming again into our hearts. The more we are centered on Christ, the more likely we are to recognize Christ's presence in the situations we encounter. The better versed we are in Christ's ways, the better chance we have of seeing him in others. And the better we know ourselves, the more able we are to make room for him in our souls.

The how is trickier. We have jobs or school. We have troubles. We live in a busy, noisy, pushy world. In the midst of all that, how do we prepare ourselves for Christ?

By sitting still.

I have said it a thousand times, but it still bears repeating: One of the best ways for us to make room for God in our hearts is to sit still and let go of everything else in the world,

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metaphorically speaking. To release the cares and concerns, the joys and the distractions and focus completely on Christ. The ancients practiced this early on in Christianity, and today it has many names, among which is the most common: Centering Prayer. Simply put, it is when we use a word or phrase (e.g., "Jesus, come into my heart") repeated over and over as a focus. After time, the phrase becomes automatic, and the world slips away.

People over the centuries have used the rosary as another tool in focusing on Christ. The labyrinth and pilgrimage work, too. And don't forget your trusty Prayer Book. Inside are many beautiful, Christ-centered prayers that speak to the heart. Praying the prayer book will help you prepare. For the techie amongst you, remember that app I mentioned a couple of weeks ago? That's a good Advent tool.

Or how about reading and re-reading the Gospel stories of Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, John the Baptist and the birth of Christ? Read, mark and inwardly digest these stories and their meaning. Go beyond the television specials or the Hallmark cards.

However you prepare, remember that it is the coming Christ we prepare for. What else could deserve more attention?

We open our first Advent Calendar doors this Sunday and light the first candle on the Advent wreath. Be there to help us!

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### The News of the Diocese

**INDABA Guests Need Beds:** Now that we have an Indaba Team, we need hosts for one Sunday. We do not yet know which weekend we will be hosting guests from New York City and Region II, but we know it will either be in January, May or September. You do not have to be on the Indaba team to host someone - in fact, there are more guests than Indaba team members, so it is essential to have parishioners put folks up. Please contact me (Fr. Chuck) if you think you might be able! Thanks!

**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.diocesenyny.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

#### November

30 On the feast day of Saint Andrew the Apostle we pray for creativity in introducing others to Christ.

#### December

- 1 On World AIDS Day, we pray for the work of the HIV/AIDS Committee of the Social Concerns Commission and for those around the world affected by HIV/AIDS.
- 2 Good Shepherd, Roosevelt Island
- 3 St. Ambrose's Church, Manhattan
- 4 Grace Church, City Island, The Bronx
- 5 St. Luke's Church, The Bronx
- 6 St. Andrew's Church, Staten Island

#### **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

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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.

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

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**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](http://www.afedj.org)

Also, Episcopal Relief and Development is gathering funds for the hospital. Donate online at: [www.episcopalrelief.org](http://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**

**Advent Eucharist Booklets:** Part of our preparation for Christ's coming will be to use special Advent service booklets during the season (with the exception of the Bishop's visit on December 14). The Eucharistic Prayer, especially, is different. It is taken from "Enriching Our Worship," an authorized alternate liturgical source for the church.

**Christmas Stars are Back!** Many of you wait all year for the Stars to show up on the wall of the church. Last Sunday, they made their return to St. James', so come get your stars and shop for Christmas presents for kids who are in real need. You'll have the fun of shopping (if you're into that sort of thing) and know that you're really helping someone at the same time.

**Candy/Ornament Sale Coming:** The annual Candy/Ornament Sale for Outreach this year is on **Saturday, December 13!** Come get your Christmas candy, find an ornament for your tree, and know that you are helping to feed and otherwise help your brothers and sisters.

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As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth...

St. James' Sunday School will be holding a special  
Christmas Event:

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
10:00am- 11:00am



Parents, friends, relatives; please join us along with our Sunday School children for some craft making, fun skit performing and birthday cupcakes in preparation and celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Join our cast of stars as we celebrate Jesus' birth with family, fun, and faith!

R.S.V.P.- Valerie Gaulin- 845-849-0221 or [valerie.gaulin@rrd.com](mailto:valerie.gaulin@rrd.com)

**Newcomers Reception Announced:** If you are relatively new to St. James' - that is, if you've been here for about a year or less - you are invited to our **December 19** Newcomers

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Reception. It is at 7:00 pm. Come and meet your fellow parishioners, learn more about what is going on at St. James' and how you can get involved if you want to.

**Epiphany Pageant Date Set. Actors Still Wanted!** The Epiphany Pageant is set for **Friday, January 2 at 7:00 PM**. We chose this date because it is the weekend before Epiphany, and because school is still on break that day.

We had a great response in our call for Pageant actors last week, but we want more. We especially are looking for younger actors, so kids, step right up!

**Have You Pledged?** If you have not had a chance to pledge yet, take heart! You can pledge any time through the year. I promise, we won't turn it away. And as you consider what you gave, consider how it is a reflection of what God has done in your life. As we say each Sunday at the 8:00 a.m. Eucharist, "All things come from thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee."



**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.

**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, Jane Gagliardoto, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Liz Handman, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Dalton K., Barbara Knakal, Leslie, 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.

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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):	Susan Gausepohl, Drew Seils, Evan Weaver, Brian O'Leary, Sr., Kurt Burkhardt, Samuel Ruder, Richard Secor, Bev O'Halloran and Andrea Tegtmeier
Birthdays (next week):	Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder, Lori Fenwick, Bonnie Foote, Anne Meisner, Brandon O'Mara, Alex Kramer and Saira Shahani
Acolytes:	November 30: Nancy Montero and Chris Santos December 7: Chris Granados-Kramer and Bryanna Burkhardt
Altar Guild:	November 30: Team II December 7: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	November 30: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris December 7: Debbie Belding and Paul Littlefield
10 a.m. Readers:	November 30: Patty Caswell/Justin Bohlmann December 7: Regina Ardini/Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	November 30: Kathie Champion and Mary Gabel December 7: Bobbie and Cliff Wells
Pledge Clerks:	November 30: Paul Littlefield December 7: Deb and Doug Belding
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	November 30: Mary and Elizabeth Gabel, Gail Ganter-Toback, Mary Jo Garlo and Peter Frances December 7: Valerie and Kasey Gaulin, Steve, Susan, Rebecca, Annabeth and Andrew Gausepohl
Coffee Hour Hosts:	November 30: The Choir December 7: Audrey Horne and Saira Shahani

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### This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:24-37

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

Sermon Preached on  
Last Sunday after Pentecost (Christ the King)  
(November 23, 2014)

### "Unseen King"

The past couple of weekend have felt like going back to school.

At Diocesan Convention, I attended a workshop on the importance of social media in ministry. Last Tuesday, I was at the Deans Conference where there were a couple of short lectures, one on developing a church Safety Team and another on how best to use social media for ministry. This past Friday and Saturday, Deacon Gail and I went to a mini-conference on Latino Ministry. Know what one of the most important things to learn in Latino Ministry is? Not Spanish. Yup, social media.

Do you detect a pattern here? Social media is a much bigger part of ministry than many of us have understood.

What is social media? Some forms have been around a long time: radio for example. Or television. They are ways to communicate to a wide group. Of course, radio and television are one-way communication while social media today is almost always two-way. I send something out into the world, and others can respond.

A simple example: you've all heard of FaceBook, I suspect. Sometimes, people share silly things like what they're having for dinner, or a funny video they saw. But you can also put out a thought or a question - say for example, "How long should the Peace be during church?" Then people from all over the world can share their thoughts or experiences. On one Facebook group I am part of - Episcopalians on Facebook - people regularly ask for prayers or for words of advice.

Now, I always thought of myself as a tech savvy guy. St. James' has a website. We're on FaceBook - and if you haven't, you should like St. James' on FaceBook. I even have a Twitter account...which I don't really know how to use.

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The experts all said these were necessary but not sufficient. Now there are things like Medium, LinkedIn, SnapChat, Tumblr, Vine, WeChat and Whisper. All different ways for people to share information with others whether it be words, pictures or video.

My point in bringing up all of these new media is not to make those of us above a certain age feel old - which it kind of did - but to give us a sense of the landscape in which we are called to do the work of the gospel.

One point these workshops drove home was that the church is slow to adapt. We like to keep things exactly as they've always been. We don't even like to change light bulbs. But sometimes, by clinging to old ways of doing things, we lose sight of the one thing that does not change - Christ - which we do at our peril.

This is especially pertinent today - the Feast of Christ the King. Jesus is our King - a big deal for Americans.

But to have a king means to obey him, and Jesus gives us commands in two main areas.

One is in today's gospel. He calls on us to serve those in need, because in serving them, we serve him unawares. Christ is unseen but present in the children who will find Christmas gifts under their trees thanks to those stars on our wall. Christ is unseen but present in those families receiving Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets. Christ is unseen but present in those whom we feed at the food pantry, in those we used to feed at the homeless shelter, in those we forget about in the prisons, and yes, even in those who slip across the border desperate to find a way to survive in the world.

The Gospel says Christ is in them, and if we forget that, if we choose not to reach out to them, we do so at our own spiritual peril. Jesus does not use the threat of hell very often, but he does when it comes to NOT caring for the stranger, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, or the imprisoned.

**THIS IS NOT VOLUNTARY. IT IS COMMANDED.**

So that's one of the ways Jesus commands us, and we, his loyal subjects are to obey - to serve what we call "the least of these," knowing in our hearts that he unseen but present in them.

But the other big command of Christ our King is to proclaim him to the world. Not like the folks who knock on doors and say, "Have you been saved?" Not like those TV evangelists I spoke about last week who too often proclaim a gospel of personal prosperity.

But, we are called to proclaim Christ in the world and to do so in a way that the world can hear. Because if we do not proclaim our king to the world, he remains an Unseen King. Which brings us back to all those social media networks.

To proclaim Christ our King, requires us to use the best tools at our disposal - to proclaim in a manner that can be heard. And like it or not, that's social media. It does no good to complain that, "Kids these days never talk to people because they're always on their cell phones." Maybe we adults should have thought about that before we invented the cell phones.

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These devices are a reality now - and they will not go away. So our task is to use them to proclaim the Christ who is the Lord of Love - to use those tools to bring folks into these pews where we can be together face to face, where we can share Christ's Peace and hug and be real together.

If we use it wisely, it can help us not only proclaim the gospel but also bring people into church AND help us better serve those in need.

Social media are not a panacea. Each will fade into obscurity in time. Neither will they solve the ills of the world or of the church. But Christ is our King - let us use every tool available so that he is no longer unseen in the world.

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### Response to Ferguson

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I promised earlier that I would give my thoughts on the grand jury decision in Ferguson, Missouri not to indict Officer Darren Wilson this week. I have been too slow in saying anything because, frankly, I am a coward and am afraid to upset people. Moreover, I am a white man living in a town that is almost 90% white. What right do I have to comment?

However, this decision affects all of us as Americans and as Children of God. We all grieve the loss of any life and are appalled at the ensuing violence. As Christians, then, it seems we ought to look at this with eyes open. I want to look at it in several areas.

I. The facts of the case. The fact is, the facts remain unknown to all but Darren Wilson. There were eyewitnesses, but they have given wildly differing accounts. Was Michael Brown a thieving, violent thug who decided to attack a police officer? Or was he the friendly, good kid, walking to his grandmother's house who died with his hands up in surrender?

It does, of course, matter what happened to spark the confrontation, but I doubt we'll ever truly know what happened. However, the explosion of anger is not just about one person being shot by an officer, rightly or wrongly. The ensuing violence is indicative of something much bigger than one isolated incident.

II. Missteps. But first - and this is based solely on what I could glean from various news sources - there were official missteps that exacerbated the situation. The Ferguson Police department clammed up immediately when the shooting took place. They did not reveal the identity of the officer or give any other information, including what happened - for days. That instantly creates an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. What else would people think but that the police were protecting an officer who had done something wrong? Even giving the appearance of such bias is poor public relations at the least.

Next, when protests started, the police quickly reached for the militarized option. They used tear gas and rubber bullets even while protests were still peaceful. They arrested journalists and forced them out of the area, too, suggesting behavior more suitable to Vladimir Putin's troops.

In other words, the police did nothing to suggest that they were on the side of the community, and much to hint that they had contempt for the people they swore to protect.

The prosecutor did not help, either. I spent yesterday learning how grand juries work, though I confess to still not understanding it. However, a representative from the ABA said that a prosecutor can virtually always get an indictment if they want one. The prosecutor's power is such that he or she can easily get a ham sandwich indicted. Since they control the flow of evidence, usually, they show just enough to convince the grand jury that there could be something. After that, they let the rest of the evidence come out in trial.

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In the case, the prosecutor showed more evidence than usual and, again according to the ABA rep, sounded more like a defense attorney than a prosecutor. When we hear things like that, it's hard to think anything other than the prosecutor was protecting the officer.

Finally, there was considerable comment on social media about the timing of the announcement of the jury's decision. Reportedly, the grand jury gave their decision at 2:00 pm. However, the prosecutor waited until evening to make it public. If he had wanted to provide a perfect atmosphere for rioting, he could not have picked a better time. What was he thinking?

### III. Deeper Roots.

This incident has deep, deep roots. If we ignore them, we are sticking our collective heads in the sand. Our country is founded on inequality. Most of us come from European stock, and our European ancestors came here not to get along and play nice but to conquer. It does no good to ignore our foundational biases. Christopher Columbus and his son, for example, are almost singlehandedly responsible for wiping out the entire original population of Haiti. They started slavery among the indigenous people there and literally worked them to death.

Our European ancestors on this continent also made native Americans slaves but found them harder to manage because they could more easily escape. Besides, there was already a flourishing trade in African slaves trade in Europe so it was easy to tap into that source.

We know the deep dark and wicked past of slavery in this country. Yes, even New Yorkers owned slaves - including the founder of our congregation. The fact that so much of our country was built by forced labor is something we do not have the right to ever forget.

Even though slavery was made illegal in the 1860s, the cultural atmosphere did not change. Many European-Americans still saw those of African descent and Native Americans as sub-human. Then there were the Chinese laborers who built the railroads but lived like slaves. Not to mention the internment camps of the Japanese-Americans (but not German-Americans) during World War II. Oh, and let's not get into modern near-slave conditions of many immigrant workers in the US.

I bring this up because it has direct bearing on our present tensions. Jim Crow laws, segregation, poll taxes and voting tests, "unofficial" discrimination that was nevertheless written into law - all these things are still in our living consciousness, and to pretend they don't affect how we see each other is dishonest.

I wish I had time to go into all the ways racism is still institutionalized (though not acknowledged as such). However, unless you believe an entire race of people are so lazy that they choose to live in poverty at much higher rates, unless you believe that an entire race of people are so uncivilized that their youth just naturally end up in prison at a much higher rate than the general population, unless you believe that an entire race of people are so out of control that they riot at the drop of a hat ... unless you believe these things, then you have to acknowledge that what we saw in Ferguson is the result of a deep-rooted systemic problem.

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And unless we address these systemic injustices at their very roots, we will continue to see violence and mistrust especially between Europe-descended Americans and Africa-descended Americans. To allow this depraved relationship to continue only hampers this country from being beacon of hope and freedom it has always believed itself to be.

IV. What Can We Do: I am only going to suggest a few things - the most obvious and superficial of steps.

a. Remember that as a Christian, your first obligation in this world is reconciliation. Jesus came to reconcile us with God and commanded us to seek reconciliation with each other. If that is not your goal in the tension-laden racial relations as manifested in Ferguson, I recommend a re-read of the gospels.

b. Pray. Pray hard. Pray for everyone involved. For those who are grieving, for those whose lives will never be the same, for those who fear for their lives or their way of life. Pray above all for reconciliation. Pray, too, for strength and courage to work for it.

c. Recognize that these deep roots are real. They are long-standing, and they are crippling. We don't need just an overhaul of police/citizen relations; we need a top-to-bottom overhaul of our society. And yes, we do need a new way of policing, because the increased militarization of the police only adds fuel to the fire. As the old saying goes, if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. We need to have a much more community-based police presence, one that represents the make-up of the community and where officers actually know the people. In some communities, new officers on a beat will go from door to door to introduce themselves - before there is any trouble. That way, people see them as human beings who are on their side, and the cops see their charges as neighbors. It does not do away with crime, but it does improve things dramatically.

d. Get informed. Never depend on just one news source - or two or three. Read history. If you find people giving a message you distrust, delve into it a bit more before passing judgment.

e. Refuse to demonize. It did not take long for demonization to kick in. Darren Wilson was a racist villain. Michael Brown was a violent thug. Those protestors were rabble who civilized people can't possibly understand. The police were military occupation forces. For what it's worth, protests, riots, looting, setting fires - that is nothing new and hardly limited to black people in America. In fact, it is found throughout the ages around the globe. When conditions are bad for a sustained period, tensions are always just under the surface and inevitably explode on occasion.

By saying, "He was a bad guy!" all we are doing is driving ourselves from the real issue - that this country for all its beauty has a problem so deeply ingrained that we need a total overhaul .

Let us work for just that - a conversion, a rebirth. In essence, we need to die to our old self so we can be born again to a new nation of reconciled people who enjoy together a more just and peaceful life.