

# St. James' E-pistle

## November 29, 2013

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I hope and trust you had a blessed, peaceful and safe Thanksgiving Holiday. I hope, especially, that you managed to avoid the chaos of "Black Friday" - or more appropriately, "Black Thursday Evening" since so many major retailers chose to open up early for their sales.

I have spoken and written publicly about this "Christmas creep" - that is, the Christmas shopping binge creeping into Thanksgiving and even Halloween. I find it harmful to the fabric of society, not because this particular holiday is so sacred but because the idea of a communal time of rest and fellowship has lost all meaning. Given our global economy, it's inevitable that there will no longer be any days that are sacred, no days exempt from the urge, even the demand to go out and buy. That is the world we live in.

If Thanksgiving is no longer sacred in our society, then you can be certain that Advent isn't. In fact, most folks won't have a clue what we are talking about. For most, the season we call Advent is just X-number of shopping days till Christmas.

For much of our country's history, keeping the sacred times was easy because it was the culturally accepted and expected thing to do. Now, it's up to us to keep Advent in a society that neither knows nor cares about it.

On one hand, this is bad. It feels like we're swimming upstream. The noise and crassness of it all can be depressing, and it can certainly drown out the call to be still, to quietly prepare for Christ.

On the other hand, what this means for us individually, is that we have to decide to understand and observe this unique season. We have to decide to make time to focus on the incarnation in our prayers and thoughts. We have to decide to remember that Advent prepares us not only for a baby but for a second coming - for dark times as well as joyful.

This Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent. It is a day where each of us has to decide whether or not to come together to share this sacred time of preparation. Fr. Masud ibn Syedullah will lead an Advent quiet day in three weeks. It takes an act of will to attend something like this because it forces you to step out of the fast-flowing stream of Christmas shopping and into the quiet.

It may seem disconcerting at first, all this quiet, but it also brings the promise of a joy far deeper than any mall can contemplate.

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Our society no longer makes observing Christian sacred time convenient. Now, you have to decide to observe them. But when you do, you experience a joy no sale-priced bargain will ever provide.

In Christ,  
Chuck+

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### **The News of the Diocese**

**Election of a Bishop Suffragan on December 7<sup>th</sup>**: Please pray for the candidates and the delegates who will elect a Bishop Suffragan. Delegates from St. James' are: Fr. Chuck, Deacon Gail, Andy Hall and Wilma Tully.

### **The News of the Church**

**Advent Quiet Day**: December 21 from 10 AM to 2 PM in the Chapel. Fr. Masud will lead you through three meditations of anticipation, hope and preparation for the Joy of Christ.

**Cookie/Candy Sale on December 14<sup>th</sup>, from 9 AM to 3 PM**. The annual Outreach Cookie/Candy Sale will raise funds for our Outreach ministries and let you pick up those last-minute goodies on your list! We still are in need of bakers and candy makers! 10 dozen cookies from each baker please, and at least 5 lbs. of candy or fudge. One of our parishioners, Audrey Stenger, will again be making her beautiful evergreen centerpieces for sale. She will also be donating three of them for a raffle. Proceeds from this sale helps us buy the 25 Stop n Shop gift cards for the families Christmas dinners.

**Our Christmas Stars are Up!** Many thanks for a great first week adopting these stars for the 50 children from 19 families we help out during Christmas!

We would LOVE to have all of them taken! Please do not wrap these gifts, but you are welcomed to donate some wrapping paper, scotch tape or gift bags for the parents to use to wrap their children's gifts. Make sure you put the star either on the gift or in the shopping bag it was bought in. Return it to the Wilks Room no later than Friday, December 20th. Tell your friends, co-workers or other family members about this wonderful program we sponsor every year!

**Book Group**: The "Prayer for Owen Meany" group is normally scheduled for Thursdays at 7:00 PM. Fr. Chuck must be away that evening and cannot attend the group. Unless someone else would like to facilitate it that evening, it will need to be cancelled.

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**CHRISTMAS SERVICES:** Look for a formal flier soon - until then, please know that we have two services on Christmas Eve. A family oriented service at 6:00 PM and a candlelight service at 10:00 PM. There is also a simple eucharist on Christmas Day at 10:00 AM at the chapel.

***Please keep the following people in your prayers:***

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kurt Burkhardt, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, Jack Gordy, Harold Hall, Jolanda Heijenbrok, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, 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:	Brian O'Leary, Sr., Kurt Burkhardt, Samuel Ruder, Richard Secor, Bev O'Halloran, Andrea Tegtmeier, Melinda Harris, Gary Glancey and Hank Schroeder
Acolytes:	December 1: Team II December 8: Team III
Altar Guild:	December 1: Team Number III December 8: Team Number III
8 a.m. Readers:	December 1: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch December 8: Debbie Belding and Paul Littlefield
10 a.m. Readers:	December 1: Patty Caswell/Nancy Montero December 8: Russell Urban-Mead/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	December 1: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher December 8: Saira Shahani and Pat Keeffe
Pledge Clerks:	December 1: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown December 8: Deb and Doug Belding
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 1: Choir and Barbara Slegel December 8: Saira Shahani

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### This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44

Sermon Preached on  
Last Sunday after Pentecost  
Christ The King  
(November 24)

"King of What"

When our nation was first being formed, there was a discussion of what kind of government we should have. In the mix, the idea that we form our own monarchy was put forward, and George Washington's name was famously suggested as our new king.

You may have heard stories of people trying to force him to be king, but these seem to be mostly apocryphal. Washington probably didn't say anything like, "We just got rid of George III - we don't need a George I." The point remains, however, that our founders rejected kingship. We are a democracy - or at least a republic.

So, how do we make sense of this odd Feast Day of the Church called Christ the King? We're Americans - we don't do kings. We live in a democracy, yet we claim to follow a king.

What does it mean to have a king. To proclaim allegiance to a king? Are those just words? Or do they have any practical meaning for us?

This is made more complicated by the fact that we choose this king. What kind of king is it that you get to choose? Nobody has to choose him and many don't.

So here are some questions this day poses: What is a king? What exactly is Jesus king of? What kind of king is he? And what does it mean to your life for you to proclaim him as your king?

In the days of Jesus, a king was a hereditary leader. He might be a client king - more like a governor - or he could be an absolute ruler. They were pretty much absolute rulers for those underneath them and had the power of life or death. They were the first to march into battle and the first to claim spoils of war. They were constantly vigilant against enemies not only

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from outside the country but from within their own governments. Traditionally, a king's followers were absolute followers, going where he led even to certain death.

Today, monarchs are mostly ceremonial positions with no real power, certainly not in Europe where we associate most with royalty.

Is that what we mean when we proclaim Christ our King? An absolute despot or a ceremonial figure head?

Let's look at Jesus for just a moment. The people of Israel had a king already, of course - a client king who had local power and was fairly ruthless. There was always hope for something better. People knew Jeremiah's promise that we read today, that God would one day send a ruler who "shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

But what we see in today's Gospel is a man on a cross. What can you be king of when you are hanging on a cross? The sign above him mockingly proclaims him to be the King of the Jews - but he has no earthly power there. He can't deal wisely or execute justice and righteousness.

And yet, the criminal hanging next to him says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Which Jesus promises to do.

Because his kingdom is not here. It is heaven - paradise. His kingdom is eternal life. What Jesus is king of is so much more than anything we know on earth - and yet, Christians believe his kingship over us starts now.

Jesus is our king while we live here even though his kingship is not of this world - and therefore our true homes are not this world. He is king of heaven, yes, but also king of our hearts. For as long as we're here, we are in a sort of exile, governed by different rules than those of our king.

What are the rules of our king? Simple - love first, love now, love last. Our king willingly went to the cross when it was easily within his power to avoid it. This was not for personal gain but for love of people who did not love him.

Jesus does not lead us into battle. He eats with those society rejects. He feeds the poor. He confronts the rich. He heals the sick. He feeds the hungry. We know this.

So, what does it mean for you and for me to proclaim Christ as our king?

Well, unless you think of him as merely a figurehead, he is the one you follow absolutely. He is the one you obey. If you claim allegiance to Jesus as your king - the king of your heart and your eternity - then you give up the notion of "every man for himself." You give up the notion of the individual as the highest ideal. You give up the notion of taking care of number one.

Instead, you take on the ideal of serving the kingdom. Whatever the kingdom demands is your goal. You know Jesus's goals. You know the demands of our kingdom. It is nothing new. The

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only question is, can you accept a king over you? Can you commit absolutely? Can you put this king's commands above everything else in the world?

The strange thing about this feast is that King is not the only way we understand Jesus Christ. He is also repeatedly described our shepherd and our teacher. But those titles too, require following, trusting, going where he goes even when it is to a cross.

Which leaves each of us with the question: Whatever you call him - will you follow? Amen.