

St. James' E-pistle

December 2, 2016

Pulpit Notes

*The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."*

Brothers and Sisters:

Yes, it's Advent, and yes, it's a joyous time. But you'll notice that the Gospel for this Sunday isn't particularly joyful. There's just no way to get giddy over "You brood of vipers!"

Yet this is an essential part of Advent because preparation means examination. It means facing what's wrong in your life and in the world and not shying away from it. Preparing the soul to receive Christ is a dirty, hard job. Preparing the way of the Lord is serious business.

That's why I want to spend some time this week talking about the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Reservation's battle against the Dakota Access Pipe Line (often referred to as DAPL). At this very moment, there are literally thousands of people camped near the Standing Rock Reservation. Among them are official representatives of many denominations including the Episcopal Church. 2,000 veterans have chosen to "self-deploy" to Standing Rock this weekend to stand with the Dakota/Lakota peoples who live there.

Our Presiding Bishop has spent time there supporting those who protest against the pipeline. One of our priests from this diocese - who originally came from that part of the country - has been there to act as a representative of New York.

I know that this makes many uncomfortable. I've already heard Episcopalians ask, "Why are we getting involved in something so political? We should stick to religion."

The problem with this is that everything that involves people is political because gathering more than two people together means organizing, and that is essentially politics. What we do together, how we organize ourselves, how we decide to take care of each other - it's all politics.

And it's all religion.

Because our faith is that we are all of us children of God. We live on and are responsible for the world that God created for us.

So, what is the issue at Standing Rock? In short, a natural gas company, Energy Transfer Partners is building a gas pipeline from Canada to Illinois plans to run it under the Missouri River which runs through the Reservation.

The Tribe has several arguments in opposition to the pipeline. 1) As planned, it runs through sacred burial lands (roughly equivalent to our Arlington National Cemetery). 2) It endangers

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the only water source for the reservation - as well as for tens of thousands of others down river. One gas spill could cause incalculable damage. 3) The land upon which DAPL is planned still belongs to the tribe. This last point is disputed by the gas company and the government, but the Tribe argues that the land was granted to them in a Treaty of 1868. The US government has violated the treaty several times, opening it up to non-Native Americans, but the treaty itself has not been revoked.

Why is this an issue for the Episcopal Church? First, because these are the people of God. Any injustice to God's people affects us all. Just as we spent much of last year exploring our church's role in slavery, so do we also have an obligation to explore our abuse of the native peoples here. Certainly, the church has a special sense of responsibility to those who have been marginalized for so long. Second, the Episcopal Church actually has a long and strong presence on the reservation, and we respond to the cries for help from the church there.

What should we do?

As with all difficult issues, we must pray. Lift up to God the people of the Standing Rock Reservation in your prayers that their sacred lands and water may be preserved. Lift up to God the people of Energy Transfer Partners, that they may understand the concerns of the tribe and be responsive to those concerns - especially for the security of their water. And lift up to God those who are standing with the tribe. It is full-blown winter in North and South Dakota right now. Yesterday, tribal offices were closed because of harsh weather. Pray for the safety of all involved, for a peaceful - but also for a just and righteous - resolution.

Next, read. Study the tribal history. Study the history of the pipeline and its impact on the environment and the way of life for so many people. Whether you agree with the tribe or think they are simply standing in the way of progress, study a broad range of sources.

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And donate. Especially if you agree that these children of God need your support, go to their tribal website and donate to their DAPL fund. They take PayPal...



Grace and Peace,
Chuck+

John the Baptist was a voice crying out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" It was not a sweet anthem but a harsh shout. Sometimes, preparing for Christ is not pretty. It requires taking that long hard look within and without.

It is not only my view but that of our church - and many churches around the country - that this is one of those moments we are called upon to stand. John the Baptist stood in the Jordan River as a sign of the coming Christ. We stand with those at the Missouri River as a sign of the love for God's people that the coming Christ embodied.

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The News of the Church

The Bishop is Coming! Mark your calendars. On **Sunday, December 4**, Bishop Allen Shin will come to St. James' to confirm, receive, reaffirm faith and preach. Please be on hand to welcome our Suffragan Bishop and show him real St. James' hospitality!

And keep Kirstin, Georgia, and Irene in your prayers as they are confirmed and received this Sunday!

St. James' Sunday School News:

12/4- No Sunday School- All children will attend church for Bishop visit/confirmation service.

12/11-J2A class will perform Christmas story for elementary class.

12/18- Ornament crafts and Birthday party for Jesus!

12/25- No Sunday School- MERRY CHRISTMAS!

1/1/2017- Movie

Stewardship Gatherings for All: Just one more Stewardship Gathering remains. **Friday, December 9 at 7:00 PM** at the Chapel. Because life is busy, our plan is to keep this meeting to a one-hour limit.

If you were invited to an earlier meeting and were not able to attend, please feel invited to this one!

When you get your invitation, please RSVP as soon as possible, and please make every effort to attend. It's that important.

Pageant Sign Up Sheet: We are still looking for 1 or 2 more actors for our Epiphany Pageant, *Epiphany and the Band*. The Pageant will be held on **Friday, January 6** at 7:00 PM. We have speaking roles, non-speaking roles, and stage crew positions. All ages are welcome and encouraged! So look for the sign-up sheet!

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Newcomers Reception: Been at St. James' for a year or less? If so, you're invited to a Newcomers Reception on **Friday, December 2 at 7:00 pm**. This reception gives you a chance to meet more established parishioners, ask questions, and have a chance to learn what opportunities are available to get involved. Ask Fr. Chuck or a Vestry member for more information.

Troop 80 Fundraisers: Join Boy Scout Troop 80, which St. James' sponsors, for a series of fundraisers.

On **December 3**, the Troop will hold Pancake Breakfasts at the St. James' Parish Hall. Times are 8:00 to 11:00 - \$8 at the door.

Lessons and Carols: On **Sunday, December 4, at 4:00 PM** at St. Margaret's, we will have the annual celebration of Lessons and Carols. Members of our choir are singing in the combined choir, so I hope you'll want to join us!

Churchyard Committee: Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

DONATE YOUR iPad! Please consider donating your old iPad - or any old tablet that can read a PDF file - to St. James'. We would like to have three or four tablets so we can download the digital bulletin onto them and let guests (or parishioners, of course) use them. This is especially helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the liturgy and all the books we use. You should erase everything on it, of course - all we need is a PDF reader and a browser (to download the information). Thanks!

Spiritual / educational websites to deepen your faith:

- Acts 8 Movement
- GrowChristians

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- Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
- The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
- Virtual Abbey
- Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
- "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
- The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
- Anne Lamott (via Facebook)

Jan Richardson - <http://paintedprayerbook.com> (Especially good for those grieving or interested in women's spirituality.)

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HELP WANTED

URGENT NEED for BAKERS & CANDY MAKERS

Pull out your best holiday recipes and fire up your oven. We are asking you to contribute 10 dozen (2-3 batches) of your favorite holiday cookies or your tastiest candy treat for the Holiday Cookie and Candy Sale on Dec. 10.

Proceeds will be used to provide a holiday dinner and gifts to 23 less fortunate Hyde Park families.

Please sign the clipboard in the narthex indicating what you are willing to contribute. If you have any questions, please call Sue at 266-3196. Thanking you in advance for your help.



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 11:00 Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures 7:00 Inquirers	2 7:00 Newcomers Reception	3
4 10:00 Episcopal Visit with Confirmation and Reception 4:00 Lessons and Carols	5	6	7	8 11:00 Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures Buildings and Grounds	9 7:00 Stewardship Meeting	10 Holiday Cookie Sale
11	12	13	14	15 11:00 Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	16	17
18 12:00 Christmas basket distribution	19	20 7:00 Vestry	21	22 11:00 Bible Study	23	24 6:00 Family Christmas Service 10:00 Candlelight Service
25 10:00 Christmas Day Service (at Chapel)	26	27	28	29	30	31

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Every Sunday, our Eucharists are at 8:00 and 10:00 AM.

Note: **On Christmas Day, there will only be one service at 10:00 AM at the Chapel. The main services for Christmas will be Christmas Eve.**

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."

- 4 The Church of the Resurrection, Hopewell Junction
- 5 St. James' Episcopal Church, Hyde Park
- 6 La Iglesia del Buen Pastor, Newburgh
- 7 St. Ambrose Church, Manhattan
- 8 The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Manhattan
- 9 Iglesia de San Juan Bautista, Bronx
- 10 Iglesia Virgen de Guadalupe, Poughkeepsie

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

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.

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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

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel
Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dee, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr.,
Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Jack Gordy,
Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn,
Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie,
Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles
Pardee, Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John
Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John
Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith,
Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy
Way, 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):	Melinda Harris, Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder, Lori Rider-Fenwick and Bonnie Foote
Birthdays (this coming week):	Ross Eames, Jr., Saira Shahani, Patricia Weber and Elizabeth Hilton
Acolytes:	December 4: Team 1 December 11: Team 2 (Russell)
Altar Guild:	December 4: Team III December 11: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	December 4: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch December 11: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	December 4: Regina Ardini and Justin Bohlmann December 11: Wilma Tully and Maggie McNamara
Ushers:	December 4: Bill and Regina Ardini December 11: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe
Pledge Clerks:	December 4: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass December 11: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	December 4: Charlotte, Tom and Peter Finnigan, Bonnie and David Foote December 11: Mary and Elizabeth Gabel, Mary Jo Garlo and Peter Francese
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 4: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil December 11: Jodi Triola, The Glanceys

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

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This Week's Hymns

TBA

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

Sermon Preached on
First Sunday of Advent
(November 27, 2016)

"Going To The Mountain of the Lord"

The past couple of weeks have been kind of rough, haven't they. Lots of tension - we've talked about that the past two Sundays.

So this week, let's do something different. Let's go up to the mountain of the Lord. It's the perfect day to do it because not only is this the First Day of Advent, but we also have a baptism today.

Both of these are moments where we leave behind the craziness of the world and climb up to the mountain.

But why would we do that?

Because both Advent and Baptism need what's on the mountain of the Lord: what I like to call the Four P's

1. Preparation. When you climb a mountain, you think you've really achieved something. Woo hoo! I got all the way up here! I'm king of the world! But then you learn it was just preparation for the rest of your life - for getting down the mountain, for doing all those things you do every day (you know, living your life), and of course for all the other mountains you have yet to climb.

Advent is all about preparation. We prepare for the birth of Christ into the world and in our hearts. We prepare the church for Christmas. It's a busy time.

Baptism is a time of preparation, too. You may think you've accomplished something when you get baptized, but it's just the beginning. Like in the reading from Isaiah: he says we going to the mountain of the Lord "that he may teach us his ways and that we may follow in his paths." We are up here to prepare, my friends. It's just the beginning.

2. Perspective. We go to the mountain of the Lord to gain perspective, and boy do we need it! When you climb up on any mountain, you can look down and see the world below. You get

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the bigger picture. From the mountain of the Lord, you see that we are all one people - all God's children despite all the differences we create.

Isaiah had that perspective. From the mountain he could see the future: how people would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. He could see how nation would not lift up sword against nation, and neither would they learn war anymore.

Advent is all about perspective. We pause - while all the rest of the world is running around panicking over Christmas shopping, we pause and consider what really matters. We see the approach of Christmas as more than a tree, a gift or a small child - we see God.

Baptism, too is all about perspective: you've just become part of something vast and timeless. You might be the star of the day, but we don't get baptized for the party or to make others feel relieved - you get baptized to be part of something huge - the Body of Christ.

3 and 4 go together. They are **Praise** and **Peace**. On the mountain of the Lord, the most natural thing to do is that we praise the Name of the Lord. And in praising God, we find Peace. As the psalm says, "Peace be within your walls and quietness within your towers." Here is where simply being in the presence of God brings out the praise - and Peace.

Advent is a time of praise - we praise God for the coming Christ, for God's great love for us. And Baptism? You get baptized in the first place because you are drawn irresistibly to that remarkable love that flows from God - that is God. And you just want to be with God and let him wrap you up in those arms of love. That's both praise and Peace wrapped up in one.

These four P's are what going to the mountain of the Lord are all about. They're also what Advent and Baptism are all about.

Preparation, Perspective, Praise, and Peace.

But there's a fifth P, and as you get ready to come down from the mountain, you realize you're going to need it.

Power.

When we go to the mountain of the Lord, it's all so we can come back down. But we don't go back down feeling depressed that we can't be up there anymore. We come down filled with power! Advent seems like a sweet time when we're all focused on a sweet baby, but that baby had power to change the world, and while we're on the mountain, God fills us with the same power. Advent goes forth knowing that Christ will come again in power. And it reminds us that in the world as we now know it, we have been given that very same power.

Baptism may seem like a sweet ceremony for a baby - but it is also all about power. Power to witness to Christ's love, grace and mercy in a world that often seems not to care for any of that. Power to reach out in love to the forgotten. Or despised. Jesus tells his disciples - who are worried about the end of the world - that there's still plenty of work ahead of us to do. To not worry about what's out of our control, but to get down there and approach the world with the power gained on the mountain. And not only power but with the Peace and Praise, the Perspective and the Preparation.

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So today...let's go up to the mountain of the Lord. We won't be there long, but the mountain will always be in us. Amen.