

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I realize that there is much to discuss with the tensions of Ferguson and the decision by the grand jury in Staten Island. I tried to address the general issue (since it is much bigger than those two incidents) last week, and forwarded to you Bishop Dietsche's statement on the decisions.

But for the moment, I would like to wish you a Happy St. Nicholas' Day.

If you did not know that December 6 is the Feast of St. Nicholas, consider yourself enlightened. It is a holiday in many countries, one which children look forward to because it involves putting your shoe out by the door the night before and waking up to find that shoe filled with goodies of all sorts. This is probably the precursor to our stockings on Christmas Eve.

More importantly, St. Nicholas has been an icon in the church for nearly 1700 years. He was a bishop in the city of Myra, in modern-day Turkey and an active participant at the Council of Nicaea in which we gained the Nicene Creed.

Of course, we mostly know him as the patron saint of children - and the forerunner of today's (American) Santa Claus. In other countries, especially in Europe, children still await a visit from St. Nicholas in full bishop's vestments.

Perhaps you are familiar with why St. Nicholas is connected with gift giving. The most famous story is of a father with three daughters and no money for their dowries. Because of his poverty, he was going to be forced to sell them into prostitution when they came of age. Tradition has it that Nicholas discovered their plight and secretly, by cover of night, threw enough gold into the house to cover the dowry of each daughter. Details vary in the telling, but this gift giving inspired generations.

What's lost in the Hallmark quality of the moment is the justice issue. Nicholas did not simply help one man and his daughters. He sought to right the wrongs in his community that could lead to such situation. He also sought to seek justice on other levels. One of the other famous stories circulating about him was that he stopped the execution of three young men by the king's police (allegedly grabbing the sword as it was about to come down), then required the king to go through a period of penance.

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

I don't want to be too heavy-handed in my approach to a bishop who is seen as the embodiment of childish joy, but it is fair to say that he was much more than a giver of toys. In fact, the story of his saving the three young men was used in Russia back in Tsarist days as evidence for the ending of capital punishment.

Nicholas is a good person to remember during the season of Advent when we prepare ourselves for Christ's coming into the world and into our hearts. He was real, and he was practical yet a little outrageous. He stepped into the fray when others held back. And, from every account, he proclaimed the Gospel with all his heart.

This Sunday, as we read about John the Baptist's proclamation of the coming Christ, perhaps we can remember that others, too, proclaim Christ with their words and actions. They, too, prepare the world for Christ who is always coming, always approaching, always ready to enter every heart.

And as we remember, perhaps we can take courage in proclaiming the Gospel ourselves. There are many ways, and the fractured relations between police and community which we started with may be a good place to start. Because the church is a place of reconciliation - not covering things over and saying, "Let's just forget about the past" but deep reconciliation. After all, if St. Nicholas can bring a king to look deep in his heart, to repent and seek forgiveness, then we can seek the same in our society.

So, Happy St. Nicholas' Day! Let us remember who he truly was and embrace his example.

In Christ,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

The News of the Diocese

Advent and Christmas Messages From Our Bishops

FROM BISHOP DIETSCHKE:

I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." It is John the Baptist invoking the prophet Isaiah. Advent is the season of the most desperate expressions of hope in a just and forgiving God, and the season belongs to these two: the great Hebrew prophet and the herald of Messiah. Over these weeks the words of Isaiah and John will be heard in each of our churches, as we contemplate again their plea before God to hear the cry of the broken-hearted and broken-spirited, for restoration, for forbearance, and finally their demand that the God of justice be just. That the author of creation make all things new. *When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.*

But always the demand for justice is tied to the language of a true repentance mingled with yearning and need, and of spirits broken and troubled before God. Even through our exhaustion in a world of wrongdoing we hear the conviction that justice is not a zero-sum game -- justice for me *or* justice for you -- but rather that justice for all is found in the accountability that all people together (and even God himself perhaps) have to truth, and that truth must be forever rediscovered, newly found, freshly discerned. A pearl of great price. A treasure in a field. So it is that in Advent we read in our texts, we sing in our hymns, we recite in our poetry the call to wakefulness, to watching, to waiting in hope. A voice astounds us. It is the shout of rampart guards! *Awake, Jerusalem! Arise!* Through the long dark nights of winter Advent we are called to attend, to pay attention, that it may be that even now God is doing a new thing.

I wrote the draft of this Advent meditation following the non-indictment of the police officer who killed Michael Brown. I am revising it tonight in the hours following the non-indictment of the police officer who killed Eric Garner. Perhaps only in death could the world see how very much these men, who were believed to be expendable, absolutely mattered. *If you Lord were to note what is done amiss, O Lord, who could stand?* Last week Bishop Shin and I participated in an interfaith post-Ferguson prayer gathering at First Corinthians Baptist Church in Harlem. I was part of an on-stage panel and was asked two specific questions by the host pastor: why is it so hard in America to have the conversation about race; and, how can we help people have an honest conversation about white privilege? I gave answers to those questions, but in truth, I don't know how to start, though I know that we must. I don't know how, because these questions are personal to everyone, and we know that they will be costly, so that we have seen that it is much easier to avoid them and pretend that we are past all that. But as well do I know that we must as Americans begin to talk to one another, for rarely has our failure to face these questions cost us more, and we in the church have a special responsibility for this. Because in this season of grief upon grief, of frustration and anger and guilt, no Advent has ever felt so urgent. No prophetic cry so personal. No justice so elusive. No hearts so broken.

After these four weeks our churches will fill for the Christmas celebration. *The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.* All those who make the day-to-day, Sunday-to-Sunday life of the church,

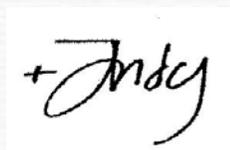
St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

and thousands more who walk their own spiritual road will come together in our houses of worship to peer again into the creche of Bethlehem and look again on the child of mystery and wonder. Whom do we seek? What are we looking for? Perhaps in the end we will see what we are disposed to see and learn what we expect to learn. But of one thing we can be certain. In rural Judea lay a child of forsaken poverty, whose parents were strangers on the road, who was born probably outside, on the ground, in the cold (for the gospeller records no stable, no outstretched hand of kindness), and who in any case will be laid on a bed of animal feed for on that night among those people "there was no place for them."

On Christmas we will celebrate the birth of the expendable one, the unneeded and unwanted boy, the unnoticed and unseen child of want -- the infant Son of Man who even at his beginning had no place to lay his head. May we not miss the point, as we give gifts in his name, as we feast in his honor, that every single human person is a fitting dwelling place for God. That the enfleshing of the Holy One is the sanctification of everybody, that the coming down of Jesus is the raising up of the forgotten poor. For God gazes upon us through the eyes of a different economy, and sees what the world overlooks, and cherishes what the world throws away, and prizes the expendable. Tonight I watch again the tape of Eric Garner's final moments, and see him again and again forced to the ground, and I believe I hear behind the tumult the whispered lamentation of God: my son! my son!

All these things are a mystery to us, a wonder, but somehow we understand that in the birth of the Christmas child -- in that particular outpouring of the love of God, and in God's own tears -- is the answer to the Advent cry for justice. And the New World of our hope.



The Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche
Bishop of New York

FROM BISHOP SHIN:

Advent is the season of waiting in hope. In the aftermath of Ferguson, the notion of hopeful waiting could not be more appropriate and poignant for this Advent. The whole nation is waiting in hope for some new beginning of racial reconciliation in Ferguson and across the nation. Racism has poisoned the social fabric of this country too long. Thomas Merton described hell as a place or a situation "where no one has anything in common with anybody else except the fact that they all hate one another and cannot get away from one another and from themselves." Racism is such an existential hell, and this nation has been stuck in this hell far too long. No one is living outside this hell. This demon thrives in division, hatred and fear of one another. We must recognize this systemic illness which keeps us all in the bondage of injustice.

It is time we work our way out of this systemic bondage. It is time we begin the honest, truthful conversation on this issue. It is time we confront and deal with this systemic illness together as God's people. On Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day, Bishop Dietsche and I participated in an interfaith prayer service at First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem, organized by the Interfaith Center of New York. Prayers and reflections were offered by the Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders of the community,

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

followed by a conversation on racism in America. It was an honest and tough conversation. But, it was also a healing and reconciling conversation, which brought us together in renewed commitment to justice and truth.

It is easy to talk of the need for reconciliation, the need to be calm and rational, the need for non-violent love and peace and so on. Such rhetoric particularly coming from the political leaders and pundits are frankly unhelpful, cheap and even offensive at the moment, as if racism in this country is an easy issue to solve. Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I am not one for cheap grace. The racial injustice is so deeply pervasive in the social, political, legal and economic fabric and institutions of this nation that it is hard to see the light at the end of this dark tunnel. The hard work ahead begins with an honest, truthful, and difficult conversation, the conversation that can bring about the conversion of hearts and the transformation of the nation. It is time we discover and value the common humanity of everyone whatever one's skin color, whatever one's religion, whatever one's ethnic and cultural background, and whatever one's socio-economic position. We are all created in the image of God, and, thus, every human life is sacred. Every human life is precious in the sight of God.

I, for one, am relieved that grace is God's work and not a human effort. Thus, I can hope, wait in hope, live in hope and preach hope. I may despair in human sinfulness, but I can hope in God's redemptive grace, because God's grace is unstoppable and does not depend upon human power. That is what Advent hope is all about. This hope invites everyone to participate in God's work of redemptive grace in the coming of Christ. But, we can only come to it in vulnerability. We must risk the change grace will bring in our hearts, in our communities and in our nation.

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

December

- 7 St. John's Church, New City
- 8 The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Manhattan
- 9 St. Matthew's Church, Bedford
- 10 St. Luke's Church, Katonah
- 11 St. James' Church, North Salem
- 12 Christ Church, Tarrytown
- 13 St. John the Evangelist, Tarrytown

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

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,

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

May this be your will
And let us say Amen.

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

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.

A Few Christmas Stars Remain! There are still a few Christmas Stars remaining on the church wall, 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.

Orchestra Rehearsals Begin: The St. James' Orchestra will rehearse this Sunday after church in preparation for Christmas Eve. As a reminder, because of Bishop Dietsche's visit on the 14th, there will be no rehearsal that day.

Bishop Dietsche Coming: Bishop Dietsche will be at St. James' on **Sunday, December 14th at the 10:00 am service.** He will confirm four of our youth: Laurel Ardini, Brooke Schroeder, Dalton Slegel, and Jasmine Thatcher. He will also bless Pat Rooney who is reaffirming her faith that day. Please be here to welcome Bishop Dietsche. Please also keep our candidates in your prayers as they take this next step in their Walk with Christ.

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

Quarterly Chapels Service: December 14 is also the date of the next Quarterly Chapel service at 8:00 am. If you attend the 8:00 am service, please remember to go to the chapel!

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth...

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

December 7th, 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@rrrd.com

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

Newcomers Reception on December 19th: 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 Newcomers Reception on December 19th. 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.

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.

Hospital Bed Available: Do you or someone you know need a hospital bed? A parishioner has offered one for free to anyone in need. It is in excellent condition but no longer needed. If you are interested, please contact Fr. Chuck who will put you in touch with the parishioner.

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

Christ is Born! Come Celebrate!



Christmas Eve

6:00 PM
Family Service

10:00 PM
Candlelight Service

Christmas Day

10:00 AM
Quiet Eucharist
(at chapel,
10 E. Market St.)

St James' Episcopal Church

4526 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY 12538
For Info, call: 229-2820

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

All Welcome!

Free Admission!

A

Desert Home



Companion

An Epiphany Pageant
Radio Variety Show

January 2, 2015 - 7:00 PM

St. James' Episcopal Church
4525 Albany Post Rd
Hyde Park, NY

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

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, Heattr Francese, 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, Edmond Orchowski, 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):	Gary Glancey, Hank Schroeder, Lori Fenwick, Bonnie Foote, Anne Meisner, Brandon O'Mara, Alex Kramer and Saira Shahani
Birthdays (next week):	Patricia Weber, Skye O'Halloran, Sylvia Erlandson and Wayne Gibson
Acolytes:	December 7: Chris Granados-Kramer and Bryanna Burkhardt December 14: Jasmine Thatcher, Charlie Urban-Mead and Jaylen Thatcher
Altar Guild:	December 7: Team III December 14: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	December 7: Debbie Belding and Paul Littlefield December 14: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	December 7: Regina Ardini/Bobbie Wells December 14: Wilma Tully/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	December 7: Bobbie and Cliff Wells December 14: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

Pledge Clerks:	December 7: Deb and Doug Belding December 14: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	December 7: Valerie and Kasey Gaulin, Steve, Susan, Rebecca, Annabeth and Andrew Gausepohl December 14: Wayne and Debbie Gibson, Gary and Susanne Glancey and John and Gloria Golden
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 7: Audrey Horne and Saira Shahani December 14: Jodi Triola, The Eames and Pat Rooney

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

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 30, 2014)

"Out of Darkness"

In novel writing, there is a maxim: push your protagonist until he or she can stand no more. Then push them some more. Then more until you - the reader - can stand no more. It is only when things are impossible - in the midst of either physical or emotional carnage - that the hero can then come in and save the day. Or not, depending on if it's a happy ending or tragedy. Regardless; at some point things will always be as dark as possible for the main character. Which makes you wonder if art really does imitate life, because things regularly seem so dark in our world, don't they? Every day of every year you can hear someone say that the world is going to hell in a hand basket, or that the signs of the end are clear. And every day, someone is looking to the sky hoping this is the day when Jesus will come and set things straight. I mean, if Jesus is waiting for dark times to appear, as our scriptures suggest, wouldn't now be a good time?

St. James' E-pistle

December 5, 2014

I wouldn't hold your breath.

Not that I don't believe Christ will come again. It's just, I suspect my own personal end will come before the final dark times. That is, I believe I will die before the second coming. Not that it matters. Whether I die individually or in the mass extinction of humanity, it comes down to the same thing: we live and we die, and dark times are always with us until we do.

That's how it has been from the start. Isaiah, says, "you have hidden your face from us, oh Lord." The psalm says, "show us the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved." Those are the words of people in dark times waiting for the divine to come to the rescue.

Any student of history knows that things got a lot darker for humanity. There have been countless wars with whole peoples exterminated. There have been natural disasters we can only imagine. Today, we worry that we are destroying our ability to survive through climate change. And war. And domestic violence. And perhaps the Christmas shopping season.

But maybe we are like characters in a novel and can be pushed - or rather push ourselves - much further than we think. Maybe the world isn't quite in that hand basket. Not yet anyway. And maybe, our job isn't to fret over how dark it is right now, or how bad society seems.

Because if we sit around waiting for Jesus to come out of THIS darkness - when he didn't come down in the clouds at other times of darkness - all we're doing is contributing to lack of light. And though I have no idea when Christ will come again, I am certain that Christ desires us to be about the work of living - not merely waiting - for as long as we are here.

We just saw the new movie, "The Theory of Everything," about the life of Stephen Hawking. If you don't know who he is, he's a physicist who in 1963 was diagnosed with ALS and despite losing virtually all motor function has outlived all expectations and done groundbreaking work in the process. Though he and I disagree on theology, his decision to keep living and working in what had to seem like the darkest of times, resonates with Jesus' command to keep awake.

So why does the church force us to think about all this darkness just when we are beginning the holiday season? Where's the joy and happiest-time-of-the-year stuff? Well, like any good novel, you have to understand what's at stake. We have to remind ourselves of where we are so we can know where we want to go. We are in a fallen, corrupt and temporary world, and we are working our way toward the Kingdom of God. It is a dark path and one that often discourages us and tempts us to give up.

But the author of OUR story says keep awake. Keep moving forward. Keep Christ in your mind even when you can't see him. We don't know how dark the future will be or when He will come. But we do know that as long as we are here, our part of the story is to be light in our present darkness. The candles we light in Advent remind us not only of Christ's light in the darkness, but of our own, too. Amen.