

St. James' E-pistle

February 12, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I recently found myself in an extended correspondence with a gentleman from Poland about the value of the US Constitution and in particular the first amendment, and even more particularly the religious establishment and free exercise clause.

Here's the text of that portion: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The conversation began when he asked why anyone would object to sequestering Muslims if they were a terrorism risk. He did not understand why public safety was not more important than respecting their religious freedom.

When I mentioned that to sequester (or deny entry to the country) based solely on religion is unconstitutional, he said he failed to see why we would put ourselves at risk just for (his words) "some words on paper." I found it difficult to get across how important those words are to us as a nation.

I'm no constitutional scholar, but I do believe one of the most brilliant things within our constitution was the guarantee that we would have no state religion and that people of all faiths have the free exercise of their religious traditions.

Like all constitutional freedoms, there are limits of course. For example, the Supreme Court has ruled that the state can force inoculations of children even if parents would not allow it for religious reasons, if the state had an overriding interest in protecting public health and safety. Other religious practices are not allowed as well: polygamy and human sacrifice come to mind.

But in general, our society is based on the idea that each person can peacefully practice their own faith without fear of government interference, censure, or outright discrimination.

Last week, we saw the excellent production of "And Then They Came For Me" which prominently featured our own Wendy Urban-Mead in the cast. This play was about the holocaust - people being sequestered, then exterminated, based on their faith. It is heartbreaking, of course, but more importantly, the show reminds us that this sort of thing can happen again - even in a "progressive" society, even in this day and age. It reminds us that every generation is responsible for guarding against such religious discrimination.

These are no idle thoughts. There has been actual talk on our public airways of rounding up Muslims.

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I mention all of this for a couple of reasons. First, this is Lent, a season in which we are called upon to examine our lives and our sin. To judge someone based on their culture or faith qualifies as sin. Second, the ongoing and festering mistrust between Christians and Muslims grieves God and needs to be addressed.

While our Lenten programming is already set (see below), this Spring I hope to organize an evening of conversation between Muslims and Christians. If you are interested and able to help with planning and organizing, I welcome your help! Let me know.

In the meantime, consider not only our constitution but our faith. As Paul says in this Sunday's epistle: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all."

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Lenten Meditation Booklets: You can now pick up a Lenten Meditation Booklet in the Narthex. Thank you everyone for your contributions!

Lenten Breakfast: Please join the entire congregation for the Lenten Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. Sunday in the Parish Hall. Who can resist the delicious fare cooked up by our loyal Lenten Breakfast volunteers? Hope to see you there.

Outreach Meeting: The Outreach Committee will have its next meeting next Wednesday, February 17th at 6:30 pm in the Wilkes Room. All are welcome to attend.

Youth Group to Special Olympics: The Youth of St. James' will be volunteers on February 20 for the Special Olympics. Please cheer for them as they cheer on some very special athletes. If you have not signed up to be part of it but would like to, please contact Fr. Chuck as soon as possible.

PLEASE PLEDGE! If you have pledged for 2016, thank you! If you have not yet pledged, it's not too late. We would like 100% participation this year in pledging, no matter the amount.

Pledge Envelopes: If you pledged but have not yet received your pledge envelopes, you can do so on Sunday. You can also pick up your 2015 statement of giving (helpful for taxes).

Boy Scout Breakfast:

A hearty fresh cooked breakfast!

Your choice of:

Pancakes (Regular, chocolate chip or blueberry) Scrambled Eggs ~ Sausage or Bacon

Hash browns ~ Orange juice

Coffee or Tea

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Where: St. James' Church
4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park
When: Saturday, February 13, 2016
Time: 8:00 am - 11:00 am
Cost \$8:00 per adult ticket
\$6:00 per child ticket

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"Remember That You Are Dust"

Preparing for Death
In order to Live more fully...



Wednesdays at 7:00 PM
St. James' Chapel
10 East Market Street



February 24: The Spirituality of Dying

The Rev. Chuck Kramer, Rector of St. James'

March 2: Wills and Legal Matters of Dying

Mr. Michel Haggerty, Lawyer specializing in wills and elder law

March 9: Working with The Funeral Home

Mr. Rob Sweet, Funeral Directory, Sweet's Funeral Home

March 16: Planning Your Funeral Service

The Rev. Chuck Kramer, Rector of St. James'

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

- 14 St. Luke's Church, Eastchester
- 15 Zion Church, Wappingers Falls
- 16 Canterbury Downtown
- 17 Christ & St. Stephen's Church, Manhattan
- 18 St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, Stony Point
- 19 Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry: Grace Church, Port Jervis
- 20 Diocesan Commission on Ministry

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.

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:

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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, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, 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.

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Birthdays (this past week):	Cathi Tegtmeier; Doris Mack; Paul O'Halloran; William Fenwick; Deborah Belding
Birthdays (next week):	Elizabeth Gabel; Meg Connolly-Burkhardt; Tadgh O'Halloran; Stephanie Barkoe; Regina Ardini
Acolytes:	February 14: Bryanna, Amelia and Braeden February 21: Jasmine, Jaylen and Bill
Altar Guild:	February 14: Team Number I February 21: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	February 14: Angela Henry and Lucille Ogden February 21: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	February 14: Wilma Tully and Andy Hall February 21: Patty Caswell and Wendy Urban-Mead
Ushers:	February 14: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne February 21: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	February 14: Doug Belding and Anna Marie Pitcher February 21: Paul Littlefield and Janet Bright
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	February 14: Morgan Kinne and Milena and Abby Jewel; Edith Kline; Rudy and Barbara Knakal February 21: Walter and Lynne Koch; Ashley Konyn; Allelu Kurten
Coffee Hour Hosts:	February 14: Lenten Breakfast February 21: Lenten Breakfast

This Week's Lectionary

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

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

Sermon Preached on Last Sunday after Epiphany (February 7, 2016)

"Glory"

As I understand it, there's a football game this evening that's getting some of attention. Lots of 200-300 pound men crushing each other, all for the chance of glory.

Well, okay, for lots of money, too. But mostly glory!

Which begs the question: What *is* glory? And why do we use the same word for football and for what happened on the mountain in that event we call the Transfiguration? Because I just don't see them as having much in common.

To start off, maybe we should look at that word, Glory, as used in today's gospel. In the Greek, it is "doxa" - from which we get other words like doxology and orthodox. In Greek, it has several meanings including "brightness" (like the stars in heaven) but also "opinion" (as in having a high opinion of someone).

But here's where it gets complicated. You see, even though the Gospel was in Greek, the people in the Gospel spoke mostly Aramaic which is sort of a cousin to Hebrew. And, of course, Hebrew was the mother language of Jews then as now.

Which means that the disciples had a more Hebrew way of thinking - and the Hebrew word for glory is "kavod." Kavod means something like "heavy" - perfect for the NFL, right?

Only this sense of heavy is not just big and powerful. When Jews talk of God as Kavod, they mean beyond human power, they mean the weight of holiness. When something is kavod, it is to be taken seriously as it has gravitas.

So here, in the Transfiguration, we have Jesus shown in his glory. He literally shines brightly. Moreover, he's with Elijah and Moses, the human embodiment of the law and the prophets, the two heaviest hitters in Judaism. (To mix my sports metaphors). Jesus shines and has the weight of all who have gone before to back him up.

Clearly, when his disciples see Jesus' glory, they take him very seriously. The fact that God then speaks from the cloud and tells them to listen to him only reinforces the message.

But here's a question: why this glory at this particular point? I mean, they already confessed him to be the son of God. And why not tell anyone - because if you didn't catch it, they said nothing to anyone about what had happened until after the resurrection.

The answer is really quite simple. Right after this event, Jesus would begin his journey toward Jerusalem and the cross. It was going to be a long and difficult time, and the disciples would need something to hang onto, to sustain them in the days ahead. Seeing the glory of the Lord would do that. It would not only remind them of Jesus' divinity (brightness) but also of the importance (weight) of what they were doing.

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Now, you might ask why they didn't tell anyone about this till afterward. Jesus often told people not to talk about his miracles, probably because they were never his main purpose, and they could distract from the main purpose of reconciliation.

But I suspect this time was different. Talking about Jesus' glory at that point might have been worse than a distraction. It might have made the passion impossible. Last night we watched the Bridge of Spies about the secret negotiations to release Francis Gary Powers. The lawyer who negotiated the exchange of spies had to do so without anybody knowing - not even his wife for fear of messing up the negotiations. It was a brave and good thing, but any glory or honor had to be delayed.

So this moment of glory for Jesus is just that - a moment. It reinforces for the disciples whom it is that they serve and just how important their work is. It sustains them in the coming storm.

We get to see that glory, too. In fact, we live in it, knowing who he is and what he did to bridge the gap between God and us. The difference between us and the disciples that day is, we don't have to keep it secret.

So whether you see brightness or heaviness in Jesus, know that it is glorious. Share that glory. Because Jesus' glory, unlike that of any Panther or Bronco, is forever. Amen