

# St. James' E-pistle

## February 7, 2014

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I hope you stayed safe and - if possible - at home during the snowy parts of the week. I hear it will snow again on Saturday, so let's hope it doesn't affect us Sunday!

Whatever happens, however, we can trust that God is with us through it all. We can also trust that we are meant to look after each other. As I said in an e-mail a couple of days ago, check in on those around you. Part of what it means to be a Christian is to care for each other.

Caring does not stop at the physical, however. Our faith embraces this world we're given to live in, but it also embraces the relational - our relationship with God our Father, and our relationship with each other.

As we approach the last days of Epiphany and turn our thoughts toward Lent, we are reminded to care for each other spiritually. One of the best ways we have is to share a bit of your spiritual journey with your brothers and sisters and at St. James', we do that through LENTEN MEDITATIONS.

You have probably written a Lenten Meditation before. It doesn't have to be long or complex - just a few lines about where God meets you in your life. You might use an incident from your life, a story you heard or taken inspiration from the scriptures of the day (which are provided on the sign-up sheet).

I encourage you to take at least one day (many like to sign up for 2 or 3) - the sign-up sheet is in the narthex this Sunday.

There is an article with more information about the meditations, but I wanted to stress it here because these are so important to our life together. I hope you'll feel called to writing one or two.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### The News of the Diocese

**Holy Trinity Cathedral - Port-au-Prince, Haiti to be Rebuilt:** Are you aware that the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti is part of our international Episcopal Church? A church that extends beyond our own country's geographic borders to the Caribbean to Micronesia in the Pacific and to countries in Europe. The Diocese of Haiti is part of our own Province II of which the Diocese of New York is also a part.

Four years ago on January 12, 2010 a devastating earthquake struck Haiti. There were hundreds of thousands of God's beloved children killed, hundreds of thousands of God's beloved children seriously injured and more than a million of God's beloved children left homeless. Since the earthquake, Haiti is slowly, very slowly beginning to rebuild with the support of Episcopalians and the world-wide community responding to the various needs that arise.

One of many, many buildings destroyed by the earthquake was Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince and the many affiliated Episcopal institutions in the Cathedral complex. The Cathedral, the heart of the Episcopal Church in Haiti, has not just been a beacon of hope for Episcopalians in Haiti but for all Haitians.

The rebuilding of the Cathedral has become a priority for the Haitian people, not only for being a central place of worship, but also for being a prominent center for the performing and visual arts.

The Episcopal Diocese of Haiti and the Episcopal Church have selected Kerns Group Architects of Arlington, VA as the architect for the new cathedral.

The new cathedral has been designed to meet international earthquake resistant standards; it will be self-sufficient in generating its own electricity, it will provide its own purified water in addition to supplying its own telecommunications.

As a result of extensive conversations, the new cathedral will "1. Respect and celebrate the characteristics of the Episcopal Church in Haiti, the Haitian people and their culture; 2. Provide a beacon of hope for the Haitian people; 3. Be a prominent landmark of God's abiding presence with the Haitian people and the Church's commitment to serve them; 4. Respect the memory of the previous Cathedral; 5. Be lean and smart, a model for future buildings; 6. Be inspiring, humble and hospitable; 7. Allow for flexibility and 8. Be a safe haven and self-sufficient."

At our meeting in January, the Outreach Committee decided to support the rebuilding of Holy Trinity Cathedral by providing the opportunity for each of us to consider making a donation. This is in response to a request by our Presiding Bishop. Bishop Jefferts Schori has asked that

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each of us please consider being part of the rebuilding of the Cathedral by making a donation. Although the original request was for January 12, the 4th anniversary of the earthquake, the Outreach Committee decided to set aside February 9th and February 16th.

There will be special bulletin inserts and envelopes provided on two Sundays - Sunday, February 9th and Sunday, February 16th. If you wish to write a check, please make it payable to St. James' Church with "Haiti Cathedral" in the memo line.

Together, our collective blessings will be join with others to help rebuild and to provide hope to our Haitian brothers and sisters. Thank you for your consideration.

Deacon Gail on behalf of the Outreach Committee

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

**Acolytes training Thanks:** At last week's acolyte training session, seven acolytes participated. Thanks!

**Thanks to Boy Scouts:** Thanks go out to Troop 80 for hosting coffee hour last Sunday, Boy Scout Sunday.

**Lenten Meditations:** It's time to get your favorite dates for the Lenten Meditations! Sign up this week to write one or two meditations to share with your brothers and sisters in Christ. It can be brief, long, poetry, opinion - or visual art. Whatever helps you reflect on the holiness of Lent and what Christ means to you. Scripture readings are provided each day which you may choose to use for inspiration.

**Notice of Inquirers classes:** Bishop Dietsche will visit St. James' on December 14, 2014. He will confirm, receive and reaffirm the faith of all who seek it. To be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church, you need to participate in the Inquirer's Series of classes. If you have not already done so, please see Fr. Chuck about registering for the classes. You have to be at least 13 to participate, and anyone under 16 must come to Fr. Chuck personally (their parents cannot speak for them) to discuss why they want to be confirmed.

**Shrove Tuesday Approaching:** Get your decorating hats on! In just one month, we will celebrate Shrove Tuesday with the annual "Pancake Decorating Fun." Kids of all ages are invited to feast first, then pull out the candies, icing and all sorts of artistic goodies to turn

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ordinary pancakes into works of art. As always, the dinner will start at 6:00 PM on Shrove Tuesday itself which this year is March 4. Be there!

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

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, Jack Gordy, Andy Hall, Harold Hall, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Dalton K., Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Deborah Porach, Don Renten, John Robinson, John Schroeder, 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:	Dalton Slegel, Suzanne Glancey, John Seagren, Jr., Skylar Whitman, Kasey Gaulin and David Wardell, Jr.
Acolytes:	February 9: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Travyn Triola February 16: Gage Minter, Jasmine Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead
Altar Guild:	February 9: Team I February 16: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	February 9: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo February 16: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	February 9: Regina Ardini/Bobbie Wells February 16: Russell Urban-Mead/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	February 9: Bobbie and Cliff Wells February 16: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	February 9: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown February 16: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Coffee Hour Hosts:	February 9: Jodi Triola and Ross & Connie Eames February 16: Dierdre Mae Micker and The Gausepohls

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### **This Week's Lectionary**

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 112:1-9

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Matthew 5:13-20

Sermon Preached on  
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (Presentation of Jesus in the Temple)  
(February 2, 2014)

### "The Falling and the Rising"

I thought of using all sorts of jokes about Groundhog Day and the Super Bowl in the sermon, but they seemed too unpredictable. So, without a shadow of a doubt, I came up with another beginning, a real a winner.

I've told you before that I like to read a lot of comic strips - maybe comics you've never heard of. One of them is called "Barney and Clyde" and it's about billionaire industrialist Barney and his panhandling homeless friend Clyde. Barney is always scheming, always looking over his shoulder, always anxious - while Clyde always seems relaxed, thoughtful and content with his lack of worldly goods.

While this portrayal of homelessness is romantic and unrealistic, I recently read that it is a very popular comic strip in Washington DC's "Street Sense," a newspaper produced for and by homeless people. They love Clyde, who seems to have a better handle on the real meaning of life than Barney. Here's an example: in a recent strip, Barney notices that Clyde has just been given a silver quarter. Barney realizes it's worth more than a quarter and tries to con Clyde out of it. Clyde, who doesn't really care about the money, sees what Barney is doing and calls him out on it - again, not because he needs a few more dollars but because he sees his friend slipping back into "schemer" mode - as if getting the best of someone - anyone - were an addiction.

It's this calling him out - pointing out the ridiculousness of Barney's position that is important here. Barney tries to hide the real value of the quarter even though he doesn't need it. At the same time, he's drawn to Clyde precisely because Clyde is so free of the need to have stuff and get over on others. Clyde is, for Barney, the truth - which attracts and repels him at the same time.

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When I read this, I am reminded of the prophet Malachi. The prophet is talking to the people of Israel who - not unlike Barney - are both attracted and repelled by God. They have returned to Israel from exile but almost immediately go back to ignoring God. Especially, the prophet calls the people out for cheating on their offerings to God - they throw in bad wheat with the good hoping the priests won't notice, or use blemished animals. He accuses the priests of doing the same and says, "who are you trying to fool? Even if nobody else sees, God sees. You call on God to come - but you won't like it when He does." He says, "the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple ... But who can endure the day of his coming?"

With both the comic and Malachi, you see people's dark hearts exposed to light. It is uncomfortable for the schemer, to say the least. In fact, Malachi says that the one who comes will be like a refiner's fire - and we are the silver that's going to be refined, the gold that will be purified "until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness."

However, when the one who is to come finally does come, in the form of Jesus, it is different than even Malachi imagines. Today is the Feast of the Presentation of Christ at the Temple. In Jewish tradition, the first-born child is presented at the temple, and Mary and Joseph are careful to offer the appropriate sacrifices.

And then Simeon shows up. Note that he is not the priest. He's just some random guy who comes in off the street and takes Jesus in his arms and starts talking to God. And I admit, when I pictured Simeon, the image of Clyde popped into my head.

Why? Because this stranger, filled with the Spirit, seems a little disconnected from the daily cares of the world. He sees what God is doing, sees beyond appearances.

At first, it all sounds great. This child is God's salvation, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people." That's good news!

But then his words become sharp, cutting. "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many and a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed."

He tells them that Jesus will expose the depths of people's hearts and souls. No thoughts can be hidden from him.

Many will hate this and oppose him because - like Barney - their hearts are a dark, tangled mess. They relate to the world by scheming, finding loopholes, beating the other guy, never resting and never trusting. The good news that Simeon speaks of is bad news for them. Like Malachi, what Luke tells us through the words of Simeon is that nothing is hidden from God. Forget drones, and cameras on every street corner, and the NSA knowing your every move - Jesus knows your heart.

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Simeon says Jesus will lead to the falling and the rising for many. And so he does. Having the darkest corners of our hearts exposed can feel like death. If we fight it or pretend it isn't so, it is fatal spiritually. But notice that the rising comes after the falling. When we allow ourselves to be opened up to Christ, there is new life. It's like baptism - we die to our old selves so that we can be born anew to life in Christ.

A life in Christ is one, by the way, not of beating others or scheming or conning but of self-giving. It doesn't require total rejection of every material good like that comic character Clyde. But it does require changing our focus - from the cares and concerns of our little worlds to the cares of Christ - which have always been looking to God, then looking to our neighbors and giving ourselves to them. Amen.