

# St. James' E-pistle

## March 14, 2014

### **Pulpit Notes**

Brothers and Sisters:

Last Sunday we had our meeting for those interested in going on the Rail Trail Pilgrimage. I can't speak for the other participants, but I am very anxious. Walking twenty miles is not that big a deal, of course, but organizing an event with a lot of variables brings out my insecurities.

One of the things that has made me feel this will work out, however, is the fact that several parishioners have stepped forward not only to participate but to help. We've had folks offer to drive sleeping bags around, to help with the food, to provide first aid coverage and more.

Perhaps that's something that Lent reminds us of. We are not meant to live in isolation. We cannot survive in this world (or in the next) by ourselves. Without the help and concern of others, we don't make it.

Another lesson is that we go nowhere without stepping out into the dark sometimes. An old priest I knew once compared faith with a flying trapeze. A voice tells you to jump, that it will catch you if only you trust. You have a choice to climb back down the ladder, but if you jump into the dark - you fly.

This Lent, I pray for each of you these two things: that you step out into the dark, into the unknown, trusting God will catch you - and that you depend on each other along the way.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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

**Ushers Meeting:** There will be a meeting of all ushers on **Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>** following the 10 AM service. It should be a short meeting just to check in, make sure everyone is on the same page and go over some possible (modest) changes in ushering at St. James'.

**Editor Wanted:** We are looking for an editor for the monthly printed version of the parish news. This is a compilation of the pertinent news from the weekly E-pistle that is then mailed to parishioners who do not have access to e-mail. Diane Webb had done the job until she moved to Syracuse. Dyan Wapnick, our secretary, has been filling in since then, but that's not part of her job. She will, however, show you what the job entails and help you get started. Please call the parish office to volunteer.

**Children's Community Chorus:** St. Margaret's Church in Staatsburg is inviting all children between the ages of 8 and 13 to join their free, non-denominational Children's Community Chorus. St. Margaret's received a grant to form this group which is not only a singing group but a class intent on teaching all children how to read music. The idea is for the chorus to sing at various community concerts as well as once a month during St. Margaret's worship. If you would like more information, please call Fr. Allan Ford at 914-299-3148 or leave a message at 845-889-4181.

**Inquirers Classes Begin:** The Inquirers Series of classes begin next **Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>** at 7:30 pm. This week's class is: "What is Spirituality?" Inquirers Classes will be each Wednesday at that time. These classes are required for all who wish to be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. They are open to everyone who would like to learn a bit more about their church and their place in it. Come to one, some or all of the classes.

**Bible Study Resumes:** After a break of several weeks, the Thursday 10 AM bible study is getting going again. If you would like to join us, please do! There is no bad time to jump in, and we'll help you get up to speed at any time. If Thursdays at 10 AM don't work for you, please see Fr. Chuck, and we'll organize something that does work.

**HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL - PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI—THANK YOU:** The Outreach Committee wanted to let you know that our special collection that was held on February 9th and February 16th for the rebuilding of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince, Haiti raised \$781.64.

The amount raised, representing our many blessings, will be combined with other gifts throughout our church-wide community in supporting the Diocese of Haiti as they rebuild their Cathedral.

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On behalf of all our Haitian brothers and sisters who will benefit from having a useable cathedral - a big THANK YOU!

Please continue to keep the Haitian community in your prayers as they continue to recover from the 2010 earthquake.

Deb Belding  
Deacon Gail

**Habitat for Humanity of Dutchess County—Faith Build:** Hopefully, by now, you have heard that the Outreach Committee has made the decision for our parish to participate in the 2014/2015 Faith Build. That means, as a parish, we have committed in making a donation of \$500 in 2014 and \$500 in 2015.

The house to be built by our Faith Build community is located at 125 Garden Street in Poughkeepsie. The young woman, who will be the homeowner upon the completion of the house, will be putting in a great amount of sweat-equality, too.

As part of our fund-raising efforts, we are encouraging participation in the Habitat for Humanity 2014 Lenten calendar. Some of our church school students have created their own "house" mite boxes. Maybe you've noticed a red lego mite box on the pulpit - created by Deidre Mae Micker. Others have created mite boxes out of coffee cans or jars. What does your mite box look like?

This Lenten calendar provides each of us an opportunity to reflect on our many blessings as we walk with Christ to the Cross. Did you eat today? Do you sleep in a warm bed? Do you have fresh running water?

If you haven't had an opportunity to pick up your calendar, one is attached here. Or you can pick one up in the narthex or in the parish house.

There will be other opportunities to become involved when the actual build begins so we will keep you posted.

Deb Belding and Deacon Gail  
on behalf of the Outreach Committee

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

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, John Robinson, John Schroeder, Marty Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, The Right Reverend E. Don Taylor, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way and Cliff Wells.

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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:	Faith Kinne, Charlie Urban-Mead, Carl Needy, Russell Urban-Mead and Richard Kuralt
Acolytes:	March 16: Gage Minter, Jasmine Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead March 23: Mike Minter, Nancy Montero and Skye O'Halloran
Altar Guild:	March 16: Team III March 23: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	March 16: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris March 23: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden
10 a.m. Readers:	March 16: Wilma Tully/Bobbie Wells March 23: Patty Caswell/Nancy Montero
Ushers:	March 16: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe March 23: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	March 16: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher March 23: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell
Coffee Hour Hosts:	March 16: Lenten Breakfast March 23: Lenten Breakfast

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

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

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Sermon Preached on  
First Sunday in Lent  
(March 9, 2014)

### "Down the Rabbit Hole"

Back in the 1990s there was a movie called "The Matrix." If you've never seen it, it's about a world in which everything we know is fake - it's all just a giant computer program. In real life, every human being is in a virtual coma, attached to a massive computer in order to act as a human battery.

There are rebels, of course, who break free and form an underground. The real lives they lead are dangerous, dirty, and painful, but they prefer that reality to the relatively pleasant computer generated lives they had lived before.

The movie centers around a man who stumbles onto this band of rebels and invited to join them. The leader of the rebels, Morpheus, says to him,

"I imagine you're feeling a bit like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole." Then Morpheus offers the man a choice of two pills. One is blue and one is red.

"This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. Take the blue pill," he tells the man, "-- the story ends, you wake up in your bed and can believe whatever you want to believe. Take the red pill -- you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."

I know, I know. This movie is soooo old. But it has been compelling enough that this scene still generates parody on social media. In fact, it was watching one of these parodies just this week that reminded me of how closely it parallels our Gospel.

Jesus' journey in the wilderness - with no food for forty days - left him famished, which seems a bit of an understatement to me. After these forty days, which parallel our forty day lenten journey, the tempter comes to Jesus.

Three times he offers Jesus a choice. Twice he starts with a challenge: If you are the Son of God. If you are the Son of God, he says, turn these rocks into bread.

Jesus says, no. We do not live by bread alone.

If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from the temple and prove you won't get hurt. Jesus says no. We do not tempt God.

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Finally, the tempter says, Fall down and worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus says no.

This parallels the movie because it Jesus' last chance: After this moment, there is no turning back. He has been in the desert not just to have a spiritual experience. This is the beginning of his ministry. He must decide how and what he will do to accomplish the will of God. He has to use whatever is available to him to show the world God's love.

Whatever he decides in the wilderness will set his course for good.

The tempter offers him attractive choices. Be the hero who feeds everyone. Be the guy who heals the world. Be the guy who has it all - the king of the world.

Each one of these sounds good - but they are no more real than the computer-generated world of the Matrix. They are manipulated illusions. Choosing these would be the same as choosing the blue pill. It would seem good - maybe even powerful - but far removed from the reality that leads to God.

Make no mistake. What Jesus chooses - his red pill as it were - is dangerous, dirty and painful. But it is real. And the truth that it leads to - the Kingdom of Heaven - is the most real of all.

This also parallels the Old Testament story - one of the most parodied stories of all time: Adam and Eve. Whether this story literally happened or not is unimportant. What is important is the intent behind it. And that intent is to highlight the choice we have in our lives.

With Adam and Eve, the tempter is the well-known serpent who offers them a choice as well. The difference is, Adam and Eve are already living in the real world, and the serpent convinces them to leave it, convinces them to go after something seemingly more attractive, more powerful, more important even.

You know the story: Eve is standing there in the Garden where they have everything they need and are only not allowed to eat from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent approaches and chats her up. "Nice day, huh? Pretty garden. Too bad God won't let you eat freely."

"Oh, we can eat freely," counters Eve. "We just can't eat from that one tree, or we'll die."

"Did God tell you THAT?" asks the serpent in mock horror. "You won't die. He just doesn't want you to eat it because if you do, you'll become a god like him. As it is," and you can almost imagine the serpent looking down at her dismissively, "you're just a puny human. Don't you want to be like God?"

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For Eve, the blue pill is in the form of that fruit - attractive, seemingly powerful but far removed from the real world of God's Kingdom. She takes it and steps into the Matrix (to mix my stories). Had she ignored the serpent, taken the red pill as it were, who knows what it might look like?

These stories of choices are relevant to us today because we are faced with them every single day. Unlike Adam and Eve, or Jesus, or even the man in the Matrix, we don't make it only once, but every day.

Tiny little choices and world-changing choices. Do I drop a coin in my mite box or spend it on coffee (or whatever you didn't give up for Lent)? Do I invade this country or leave it alone in its autonomy?

I used to do a talk where I paralleled the Adam and Eve story - how the serpent gains Eve's confidence before inserting a seed of doubt about her worth, then offering a solution - with pretty much any television commercial. During the Olympics, there was one, for example, where a US women's hockey player talked about how she was proud to represent her country, and how she owed it all to her mother who never minded her practicing her hockey skills in the house because every time she knocked things over with the stick or puck, Mom was there with Bounty Paper Towels to wipe it up.

A nice story, but the ad leaves you - and I'm talking to the moms out there - to understand that you can be a good mom too, if only you will get some Bounty. In fact - it doesn't say it, but there's the hint of a suggestion - by not buy Bounty, you might be preventing your child from reaching the Olympics.

I don't want to say that every ad is evil or tempting you like the serpent. But it illustrates that choices are before you and me every single day. We have to ask ourselves, is it real or is it the fantasy of the Matrix, the fantasy of the tempter or the serpent - a fantasy that looks awfully attractive but leads us away from the Kingdom of Reality, otherwise known as the Kingdom of God?

You have that choice over and over. Blue pill or red? Do you choose Fantasy or do you choose to go down the rabbit hole? Amen.