

# St. James' E-pistle

## March 6, 2015

### **Pulpit Notes**

Brothers and Sisters:

Yes, it is March. Over the course of the last couple of weeks, I've changed my Lenten discipline to simply shoveling snow. Contemplatively.

Honestly, though, I suspect we are all pretty much done with winter, and at this point it starts to feel like the long hard slog not only of a penitential season, but of the Israelites' sojourn in the wilderness. Only colder.

The positive side of this is that when Easter comes, it truly will feel like rebirth. The sun, the warmth, the green will make our faces look up to the God who brings life out of death.

Granted, someone suggested to me the other day that the snow might be more tenacious than we thought, that we will be celebrating a white Easter, that this winter will simply never, ever end. Even if that is the case, however, it WILL be warmer than the 3 degrees we woke up to this morning. And even if we are tromping through the white stuff next month, we will still proclaim the resurrection!

For now, though, let's just ponder our situation. Ponder our inability to control the weather - an inability which is a good thing, by the way. Ponder our physical limitations made more evident when we can't get out and about as much as we want. Ponder our emotional fuses which seem to be shorter than they were in, say, December.

We ponder these things to remind ourselves that we are not God. Never were. Never will be. What's more, God does not tailor the weather to our desires. Or anything else. It is for us to tailor ourselves to God's desires, and if that means living with snow, so be it. If that means living in a world of mean, dangerous, volatile people, so be it. If that means living a life of self-giving - well that's fine.

And it is good, too, as long as it is God we are conforming ourselves to.

Not that I'm not looking forward to Spring!

But it is good to know that whatever the weather, God is with us, and if our eyes are focused on God, all will be well.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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

#### **March**

- 9 St. Stephen's Church, Pearl River
- 10 The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Chappaqua
- 11 St. Mary's Church, Mohegan Lake
- 12 St. Thomas Choir School, Manhattan
- 13 St. Francis & St. Martha's Church, White Plains
- 14 St. Mark's Church, Chelsea-on-Hudson

#### **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:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

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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*

## **The News of the Church**



**Daylight Savings Time Reminder:** Before going to bed Saturday night, please don't forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour.

**Youth Group Overnight:** The third weekend of the month is coming up, and that means Youth Group Overnight. The March Overnight will be Friday, March 20 to Saturday, March 21 AT THE CHAPEL.

**Men's Breakfast February 21:** Our third Men's Breakfast will be March 21 at 8:00 a.m. at Cranberry's. All men 18 and over are invited! We'll eat, chat, and maybe plan a little. Join us.

**Lenten Programs:** The Lenten Program - God's Gift of our Neighbor - with Fr. Masud ibn Syedullah has been a true gift, and it has seen a great response! There are two more sessions, and you don't have to have attended the first two in order to prosper from the final two. The next session is this Wednesday, March 11. You'll be glad you came! There is a small potluck

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supper at 6:00 - bring something to share if you can, but even if you can't bring something, join us! There's always far more than enough for everyone. See flier at the end of this E-pistle.

**Easter Program:** Fr. Masud will also lead a one-day event in celebration of Easter on April 18. Tell your friends, invite neighbors! Cost for this day-long event is \$15, but includes lunch. See flier at the end of this E-pistle.

**Pilgrimage Planning Now:** We are starting plans for our Spring Rail Trail Pilgrimage. After carefully checking the calendar, we've set the dates of May 30-31 - the week after Pentecost. I am looking for a couple of volunteers who will take on organizational responsibilities such as registration. If you would like to be a part of making our third pilgrimage the best yet, please contact me as soon as possible! Thanks, Fr. Chuck

**Pledge Envelopes Awaiting You:** Pledge envelopes have arrived! Please pick them up if you haven't already done so.

**Faith Build:** Please see the flier at the end of this E-pistle.

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

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, Gloria Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Lucy Lamonica, Rosemary Leuken, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald, Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John robinson John Schoreder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

*Pray for the Repose of the Soul of Anne Meisner.*

*Pray for the Repose of the Soul of Evelynne Luty McIlravy.*

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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<br>(this past week): | Charlessa Thatcher, David Foote and Trayvn Triola  |
| Birthdays<br>(next week):      | Faith Kinne, Charlie Urban-Mead, Carl Needy, Russell Urban-Mead and Richard Kuralt   |
| Acolytes:                      | March 8: Nancy Montero, Kirstin Horn and Deirdre Mae Micker<br>March 15: Russell Urban-Mead, John Beyer and Anna Clark                 |
| Altar Guild:                   | March 8: Team Number II<br>March 15: Team Number III   |
| 8 a.m. Readers:                | March 8: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo<br>March 15: Angela Henry and Jim Smyth  |
| 10 a.m. Readers:               | March 8: Regina Ardini and Justin Bohlmann<br>March 15: Patty Caswell and Deirdre Mae Micker   |
| Ushers:                        | March 8: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher<br>March 15: Andrew and Tonya Hall   |
| Pledge Clerks:                 | March 8: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown<br>March 15: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher   |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer:        | March 8: Bruce McIlravy and Dierdre Mae Micker<br>March 15: Mike, Annette, Mike and Gage Minter, Nancy Montero and Carl and Jean Needy |
| Coffee Hour Hosts:             | March 8: Lenten Breakfast<br>March 15: Lenten Breakfast  |

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

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

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

### Sermon Preached on Second Sunday in Lent (March 1, 2015)

#### "Blameless"

The other night, Liz and I saw a movie called "St. Vincent."

Bill Murray plays a guy named Vincent who is unfriendly, drinks too much, gambles (and loses on the horses), misses bills. But he also goes into hock to keep his wife in the best nursing home possible even though her Alzheimer's long ago took her memories so that she hasn't recognized him for years. He was awarded the bronze star in Vietnam for saving a couple of guys caught under fire. He pretends to be the husband of a pregnant prostitute so she could use his insurance to get prenatal care. And he unwillingly, at first, takes care of a neighborhood boy who is the only person to see a saint underneath the gruff and scarred exterior.

I figure Abraham was a Vincent kind of guy. Maybe worse. Tradition says he was of dubious faith before God came to him. He proved himself a coward when Pharaoh wanted to take Sarai for a wife, and he wasn't a great father to either of his sons, either. But God said "walk before me, and be blameless."

And, according to...ROMANS: "Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness."

Of course, immediately after God tells him in today's passage that Sarah will have a baby, Abraham falls on his face laughing because it's so unbelievable. So, how much faith in God he really had is questionable.

Which makes us ask: how is this Blameless? Or faithful? How does he get held up as a paragon of virtue?

It's not, really. It's just that Abraham stuck with God. When he thought God was crazy, he said, "Well, if you say so." Not really believing or understanding, but trusting God just enough.

This kind of encourages me because I am not exactly blameless myself. I'm disorganized, forgetful, rarely on time, wishy-washy, afraid to take risks. Don't pray enough - and when I do, I often wonder if anyone is listening. I can go on... I'm afraid to stand up for those who suffer injustice, don't go out of my way to care for the poor and weak.... Anyone who knows me

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probably has their own list of my failings. But then again, you've probably got yours, too, right?

And when Jesus gives the command to take up our cross & and follow, most of us are far from blameless.

Because he's serious - when he told his disciples they were going toward death, he meant it. Peter refused to believe - but Jesus was dead serious. He would die. In the end, most of the disciples would die equally painful deaths.

So, Jesus really does mean letting go of this life even if it means horrible brutal death - not just for the disciples but for us. Only, most of us are unwilling to do that. In the backs of our minds, we think that's nuts, and there probably isn't one of us here who would willingly take up an actual cross and follow him to Gethsemane.

So... Blameless? Not us.

And yet, here we are, still accepted. Still loved by God. Made blameless because, well, who will blame us now that God has offered us a place in his home?

What is it to be blameless anyway? Not a mark of virtue exactly. Just a mark of not having it held against us. God knows us - and still welcomes us home.

I feel obligated to state, however, that God never lets us off the hook. Like Abraham, like Vincent, we don't just get to sit in our self-centered little lives and forget about the world. Like it or not, God will send people your way who will push you - or draw you along - on a path you might not suspect. Some individual or segment of society that needs your help. Or maybe someone who needs to help you. I don't know.

But Lent is that time when we are asked to look at ourselves and see Vincent, warts and all. Because when we do, we may just see Vincent who, though hardly blameless, is still a saint. Amen.



# Roots & Branches: Programs for Spiritual Growth

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## Parish Faith Formation Program Proposal for St. James' Church, Hyde Park

### **Lift Up Your Hearts: A Liturgy and Music Workshop in Celebration of the Easter Season**

This workshop, for ALL who love music (*not only those who sing in choirs*), is very practical and inspiring as it demonstrates how liturgy can be more than just well-orchestrated services, but authentic experiences of worship through the creative and prayerful use of music, scripture, space, and silence. Come lift up your hearts in joyful praise!

Saturday, April 18, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. (Including lunch)  
St. James' Chapel  
Donation: \$15

### **My Neighbor – A Gift of God: Relating to Those Who are Different from Us**

Increasingly in today's world, we are challenged to think about and to interact with people who are different from us. Often we look upon anyone from another culture, race, or religion as "the other," "those people."

Come join us for an evening of fellowship, food, study, and discussion as we consider these and other questions: What does Christian spirituality offer us to be both faithful to God and appreciative of our neighbors? How might God want to use us to communicate the love of God to those of other cultures, and invite them into our midst?

This four-part Lenten program will meet Wednesdays:  
February 25 – The World: Created by God, and is a Gift from God  
March 4 – All People: Created by God, and are a Gift to the Planet and to Each Other  
March 11 – God Loves: All People Equally, and Wants to be in Relationship with All  
March 25 – We are Challenged: to be Secure in our Faith, Yet Hospitable to Others

6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.  
St. James Parish House  
Bring your favorite dish to share!

***This package is being offered to St. James' Church at the reduced cost of \$1000.00.***

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Like the trees, we are created to be firmly rooted in the ground of our being, the source of all, God.  
And like their branches, we extend towards all the gift of life.

Website: [rootsandbranchesprograms.org](http://rootsandbranchesprograms.org)



## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY FAITH BUILD UPDATE

Our parish family through our Outreach Committee made a commitment to support the building of a new Habitat for Humanity house at 125 Garden Street in Poughkeepsie. We joined other churches in Dutchess County by each making a pledge of \$1,000. Together with the \$30,000 Habitat grant, our pledges would provide affordable housing for a family.

Last year many of us participated in the 2014 Habitat for Humanity's Lenten calendar raising slightly more than \$500 to help us towards fulfilling our pledge. This year we have created our own St. James' Church - 2015 Lenten calendar. The Outreach Committee is hoping to raise the remainder owed on our pledge through this Lenten calendar. The calendars are waiting for you to pick up; they can be found in the narthex of the church.

**HELP** is desperately needed in order for the house to be completed by Sunday, March 15th. Can you help? or do you know someone that can help? The following is a list of needs:

- \*taping
- \*installation of kitchen cabinets
- \*installation of flooring
- \*installation of front and back decks
- \*painting

This house, the future home of Stephanie and her three children, was blessed on Friday, August 8th. Since then many, many hours of labor have been put into making this Faith Build a reality including the equity hours put in by Stephanie herself.

However, the final push to complete this house needs some knowledgeable leader workers and helpers! Please contact Maureen Lashlee at the Habitat for Humanity office, 5 Catharine Street in Poughkeepsie. The telephone number is 845-475-9336.

Habitat builds homes for families who are currently living in substandard housing conditions. Families must meet certain criteria in order to be eligible to become part of Habitat for Humanity's housing program.

Please keep this Faith Build Project in your prayers that it will be completed by March 15th; thus providing Stephanie and her young family a new home.

If you have any questions, please contact Joanne Lown or Deacon Gail.

Deacon Gail  
on behalf of St. James' Outreach Committee