

St. James' E-pistle

April 11, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

There is something about our Lenten Meditations this year. Several people have told me so.

Just yesterday, a parishioner I ran into at the grocery store beamed and said something to the effect of, "This year's meditations have been the best I've ever read. They have meant so much to me."

Better yet, someone told me that the meditations have helped them through hard times - that just when things seemed like too much, they opened their meditation booklet and read the right words to put things in perspective.

Thank you.

This year's meditations do seem different, don't they? For some reason, there is a depth, a level of internal searching for God that goes beyond the already excellent meditations we have enjoyed over the years.

Why is this? There are a few new writers, of course, but most have written meditations in previous years. To the best of my knowledge, nobody has taken creative writing courses in the past year. So there must be something else.

Here's my best guess:

We, as a congregation, are journeying together deeper into our own souls and into our life with Christ. We are looking into each other's eyes more carefully and seeing Christ, seeing that spark of the divine which God has put into each of us. We are looking in the mirror and seeing not only the hurts and hard times but our own connection with God made so real for us in Christ.

That's been my experience.

I have seen many of us seek ways to grow more fully in God's love - not just scratch the surface of liturgy or outreach but to go deeper into the most basic questions. How do I relate to God more? Help me, Jesus, to know you more intimately. What am I called to, and how does it fit in with everything else I do? Who am I?

Those aren't the bread and butter concerns like having a job or getting an education. They are the questions we ask when we're lying in bed in the middle of the night. But they are oh so

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important because it's the asking and answering of these questions that helps us get up in the morning.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. It begins Holy Week. This sacred time is a time of walking with Christ into the mystery of his painful humanity, given for us out of deep and abiding love. It leads us to the cross but also the even bigger mystery of his glorious divinity, leading us to past death into the joy of eternal life. Let us go deep this week.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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HOLY WEEK SERVICES

**Palm Sunday - THIS
SUNDAY**

Both the 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM
services start in the parish hall.

**Maundy Thursday -
April 17**

7:00 PM. Come for the Last Supper and
Stripping of the Altar

THE WATCH

Sign up to sit for an hour or more in
the church from the end of the Maundy
Thursday through Good Friday.

Good Friday - April 18

10:30 AM. Community Walk of the
Cross starting at Regina Coeli.

7:00 PM. Good Friday Liturgy
including Veneration of the Cross.

Easter Vigil - April 19

8:00 PM. The most mysterious and
beautiful service with New Fire, and
first communion of Easter.

Easter Day - April 20

8:00 AM. A Joyful celebration of the
Resurrection! (Rite I)

10:00 AM. A joyful, family oriented
celebration of the Resurrection
followed by a good old fashioned Easter
Egg Hunt!

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The News of the Church

Habitat for Humanity/Blessing of the Build: Please bring in your collection for Habitat for Humanity on Sunday, April 27th. We will total up all of our offerings and deliver them the following week for the Blessing of the Build. Details on that will follow! All are invited to attend!

Tag Sale: There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for the town-wide tag sale to benefit Habitat for Humanity on Saturday, May 17th. A table will be provided and rents for \$15.

Empty Egg Cartons: Please bring in your empty egg cartons (preferably cardboard) for seedlings for the garden. Kindly leave them in the Parish hall.

Pledge Statements: There are still pledge statements in the Narthex for you to help you know where you stand. Please pick yours up! Also, please note that the statements are only for pledges. They do not include other donations.

Thanks to our New Editor: Many thanks to Bonnie Foote, who has agreed to take on the role of editor for the monthly printed version of the parish news.

This Week's Inquirers Class: Our next Inquirers Class is Wednesday, April 16 - 7:30 PM in the Wilks Room. The session's topic: "What is The Episcopal Church?" As always, feel free to sit in on a session that interests you even if you did not register for the series.

Vestry Meeting: The Vestry meets this Tuesday, April 15 at 7:00 PM.

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.

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, John Golden, 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.

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:	Carol Vinall and Dotty Drake
Acolytes:	April 13: Gage Minter, Jasmine Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead April 20: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Monica Rizzo, Gage Minter, Jasmine Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead
Altar Guild:	April 13: TBA April 20: TBA
8 a.m. Readers:	April 13: Angela Henry and Jim Smyth April 20: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	April 13: Donna Beyer/Deirdre Mae Micker April 20: Russell Urban-Mead/Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	April 13: Bobbie and Cliff Wells April 20: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	April 13: Deb and Doug Belding April 20: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Coffee Hour Hosts:	April 13: No Breakfast April 20: Easter Egg Hunt

This Week's Lectionary

The Liturgy of the Palms

Matthew 21:1-11

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

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The Liturgy of the Word

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Philippians 2:5-11

The Passion Gospel

Psalm 31:9-16

Sermon Preached on

Fifth Sunday in Lent

(April 6, 2014)

"Why Jesus Wept"

Jesus wept. The shortest sentence in the English language - at least it was in the King James version. My old English teacher loved this sentence - Jesus wept - because it illustrated so poignantly that all you need to make a sentence is a subject - Jesus - and a verb - wept. Jesus wept.

The problem with such a short sentence is that it leaves so many questions, the most pressing being: Why? Why did Jesus weep?

You might think this is obvious. His friend died. Who of us has not wept at the death of a loved one?

But this is Jesus we're talking about. He's the Son of God. He intentionally delayed going to Lazarus so he could show God's glory by raising him from death. Jesus knew this would happen. He knew that Lazarus would soon be among them again. So why did Jesus weep?

To get a sense of it, try putting yourself in his shoes for a moment. Close your eyes if it helps. Stand there watching the crowd come out with Mary and Martha, all of them red-eyed from crying. These are people you love, and they are so so sad.

What are you feeling now? Compassion for what these friends are going through? Regret for not going sooner to prevent Lazarus from dying? Or something more?

I suspect that moment when he says, "Where have you laid him?" and they respond, "Lord, come and see," everything boils over. Jesus weeps, not just for his dead friend or his suffering family and friends, but for himself. Not just for what has happened, but for what is about to happen.

Jesus must know what is about to happen to Lazarus. The man has been dead for four days. It cannot be for Lazarus's sake that Jesus raises him. Lazarus has been at rest, at peace. We

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believe that death is no punishment but life eternal. Now, four days into it, Lazarus will be called back into the world with the full awareness that he will die again someday. John hints that it will be some day soon, and that it will be a violent death. Jesus weeps for his friend who is ripped from heaven, who will become an object of curiosity for people, and who now has a target on his back.

Yes, it is for the glory of God, but it isn't easy. Wouldn't you weep?

He weeps also for himself. Let's take a step back from this scene and look at where Jesus has come from. Before coming to Lazarus, he was teaching across the Jordan River, out of the hands of Jewish authorities. Just before that, he had been in Jerusalem where he nearly got stoned to death for calling himself Son of God. Jesus' disciples tried to talk him out of coming to Bethany because it's too close to Jerusalem. This is also on Jesus' mind as he waits to see Lazarus's tomb.

But there is more on his mind. Let's take a step forward in time. The Passover is coming in a week or two. Jews go to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus is going, too. It will terrify his disciples, but Jesus knows this is the final confrontation with religious authority. He knows that when he goes to Jerusalem this time, it will lead to the cross. He knows that it is now a matter of days before he faces the same journey his friend Lazarus has just come back from.

He knows that people will wonder: was any of this necessary? The death of Lazarus, raising him, Jesus' own death. Why should anyone suffer like this?

The answer: Because God made us human - we have bodies, we are physical beings. If you have a body, even if you are the Son of God, you will suffer. Yes, it is worth the suffering. It is better to live and then die than to have never lived at all. But in the midst of the suffering - and sometimes in anticipation of it - it seems unbearable. For Jesus, that moment comes as he faces Lazarus's tomb and knows how very real things are about to become. So he wept.

If you need a discipline for this last week before Holy Week, maybe you can contemplate how Jesus wept, yet kept moving forward. Then ask yourself: What makes you weep? What makes the past, present and future come crashing in on you the way it did for Jesus? And what makes you get up and move forward anyway?

Then hold on to that which makes you move forward because it is what God put you on this earth to do.

Jesus wept because life is sometimes overwhelming. But he kept moving forward because his work was to make the glory of God known. Like him, we are blessed to know that as long as we live, our moving forward will touch the lives of others - and that too is the glory of God.