

St. James' E-pistle

April 29, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This will be brief because this has been one of the fullest weeks I have had in many years, and I am writing this in one of the few moments I still have available before Sunday. But there is so much to tell at the same time.

The first half of this week was spent for me at the annual Priests' Conference. It was by far the best I have attended in years. The focus was on Bishop Dietsche's "Strategic Plan" for the diocese. That is essentially a complete and wide-ranging review and revisioning of the mission and realities of our mission.

In a world where competition for time and resources is fierce and where the Church has a poor reputation, we still have work to do, and there is much hope because the path Christ has put before us - while never promising to be easy, is indeed a path of joy, peace, grace, and life.

The three categories we looked at - all of which affect not only things down at the Cathedral but here in our local parishes - are: Organizational structures, Spiritual Renewal and Witness, Money and other resources.

I'll have more to say about these later, especially after speaking with the wardens and Vestry, but for now, I would like to encourage each and every one of you to attend a Strategic Plan Listening Session on Thursday, May 5 at 7:00 PM. It is at St. Paul's Church in Poughkeepsie - details below - look for the big red headline.

Bishop Dietsche has made it clear that he is taking seriously the input he's receiving. Already, some things have gone into motion because he heard concerns (and hopefulness) of the clergy. He is determined to hear the entire diocese as well, and that can include you if you attend.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Inquirer's Sign Up: If you have not already signed up to be part of the Inquirer's Classes, a new sign up sheet will be available this Sunday. Inquirers are for all Episcopalians who want to A) be confirmed, B) be received into the Episcopal Church, or C) publicly reaffirm their faith when the bishop comes. Bishop Allen Shin will be here for confirmations on December 4. **Classes begin Thursday, May 12 at 7:00 PM** in the Wilks Room.

Boy Scout Troop 80 will be having a Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser on Saturday, April 30 from 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm.

\$10 adult/\$7 child ages 10 & under. Please see Dalton Slegel for tickets.

Strategic Plan Listening Sessions **for Lay People (including Wardens):**

ALL lay people of the Diocese are invited! This is an opportunity to learn - and influence - how the Diocese of New York will thrive and grow in the difficult environment in which we find ourselves. But the process depends on as many people as possible becoming involved. Let's get a group from St. James' to go!

The Session will take place on:

May 5, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

St. Paul's Church, 161 Mansion Street, Poughkeepsie

(845) 452-8440

Join the Churchyard Committee! Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

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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).

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.

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St. James' Episcopal Church

Presents

A Mother's Day
Tea Party



4-Course Luncheon
&
Light Entertainment
Provided by Local Actress Angela Henry

May 7, 2016

Two Seatings
12:00 pm and 3:00 pm

\$25 per person

Reservations Required, Limited Seating

Gift items available for purchase

celebrate with your mother, sister, daughter, or best friend
in a special way at a special place

4526 Albany Post Rd., Hyde Park, NY 12538 Phone: 845-229-2820

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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."

- 1 The Church of the Holy Communion, Mahopee
- 2 St. Andrew's Church, Hartsdale
- 3 The Church of the Heavenly Rest, Manhattan
- 4 Diocesan Adjustment Board
- 5 Ascension Day The Church of the Ascension, Manhattan
- 6 Holy Trinity Church, Pawling
- 7 Wardens and Vestries of the Diocese

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*

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, 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, Ashley Konyn, Allelu Kurten, 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, Rob Robinson (brother of Mary Gabel), 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): | Walter Lommel Koch; Floraine Knauss; Rachel Ogden; Barbara Jane ("Bobbie") Sprinz Wells; Jeet Shahani |
| Birthdays (this coming week): | Kathryn Clark |
| Acolytes: | May 1: Russell, John Beyer and Anna May 8: Bryanna, Amelia and Braeden |
| Altar Guild: | May 1: Team Number III May 8: Team Number III |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | May 1: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch May 8: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | May 1: Wilma Tully and Andy Hall May 8: Regina Ardini and Judy Douglass |
| Ushers: | May 1: Andrew and Tanya Hall May 8: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher |
| Pledge Clerks: | May 1: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright May 8: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | May 1: Daniel, Alyssa and Aldonna Raugalis; Patricia Rooney May 8: David, Manuela, Isabel and Grace Roosevelt; Hank and Jackie Schroeder; Rick, Suzanne, Christian and Brooke Schroeder |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | May 1: Audrey Horne May 8: Jodi Triola, Ross & Connie Eames, Pat Rooney |

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 16:9-15

Psalm 67

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

John 5:1-9

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

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Sermon Preached on
Fifth Sunday of Easter
(April 24, 2016)

"Y'all Means All"

Most of you know that before coming to St. James', I served a parish in North Carolina. So it has been with some interest that I've been following the news about that so-called "Bathroom Bill" there in which, among other things, the state made it illegal for transgender people to use bathrooms they feel fits their identity. That is, if a person is born male but identifies as female, the law makes it illegal for them to use a women's public restroom.

My purpose today isn't to comment on that law. (Though now that NASCAR has come out against it, I suspect it's doomed) Rather, it's something that one of my former colleagues there shared which I find fits today's lessons. He was sharing news reports of the rallies by churches against the law and posted a picture of people holding up signs that read, "Ya'll Means All!"

For those who don't speak southern, "Ya'll" is a second person plural pronoun, which English does not formally provide, but local usage does. Like New Jersey's "Yous guys," or in some parts of Pennsylvania where they say "You'ns." "Ya'll" literally means you all. All people have rights. That phrase, "Ya'll Means All" fits in perfectly with our lessons because it is exactly the discussion the disciples were having in the early days of the church. Who belongs? Who will be treated differently in the church? Whom does God love?

This was a big point of contention among early Christians. Since it was a movement born out of Judaism - and in fact was still considered a Jewish sect at the time of this story - many felt that anybody who wanted to follow Jesus had to become Jewish first. And that included obeying laws that required a Jew not to eat at table with a gentile, let alone eat food that was considered unclean.

Peter was initially of that school. It's the rules, and we have to obey the rules. We've always done it this way. It's our tradition. We'll get in trouble if we start eating with Gentiles. They are not like us.

That is, until God has a word with him in a vision. He is offered all sorts of good food that is considered unclean by Jews, which he initially refuses to eat. But the voice in his vision says, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

We could almost add, "And God has made ya'll clean."

Peter understands his vision to mean that even the uncircumcised are clean in God's eyes.

Then he starts to make connections with what Jesus had been saying all along. Like at the last supper when He said, "Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another." Peter understands now that Jesus didn't mean to just love the members of their little group but to love everyone whom God has made.

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This is a mind-popping revelation for him - God's love applies to everyone - and it was not universally accepted by early believers, because, well, if you're not going to keep out the uncircumcised, who can you keep out? It's like you'd have to let just anybody in.

This has been the temptation of the church for millennia. For 2,000+ years, we've found creative ways to keep people out. And I don't mean just keeping people out of church membership; I mean out of God's love.

For hundreds of years, we used the excuse of "They are not Christians" to justify denying the love of Christ to Jews, Muslims, Hindus - you name it.

For centuries, within the church itself, we used gender, race, marital status, wealth, and gender identification among other things to determine who was in or out. Remember, it's within the lifetime of this parish that blacks and whites (or Asians or Native Americans) were universally allowed to worship God in the same space. Or that women could speak publicly in church.

But in the end - at least for us who follow Christ where he led - none of this is a question. "Ya'll Means All." Jesus never gave us a set of criteria to determine who was worthy of our love. There is no checklist that you go through to see if I should openly care for the needs of another. Jesus simply says, "they will know you are my followers by your love."

And then he showed us that love by walking to the cross. Our path as followers of Christ is not easy. It is the path of love for those who are left out of love. It is the path that leads to the cross. And it is frightening.

That fear is the tool of this world to keep us from following.

But there is inspiration, too. If you are afraid, if you are tempted to exclude others from the embrace of God's love - and your part in it. If you, like those early Christians, can't imagine how you can be a beacon of light in the darkness, just think of your brothers and sisters in North Carolina, standing witness to Christ in a hostile environment as they hold up those little signs that read:

"Y'all Means All."

Amen.