

St. James' E-pistle

April 8, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

On Wednesday, I gave a lecture for the Marist College Center for Lifetime Study. This was a Comparative Religions course, and I was to lecture on the Episcopal Church - what it is, what it believes, how it came to be. You get the picture.

At the end of the lecture, there was time for questions and answers. Most of them were positive feedback or questions of curiosity about various aspects of the Episcopal Church. But one person said, "You never said anything about good works. Don't you believe in good works?"

This took me aback, and I had to think about what she meant. Certainly we at St. James' believe we are called to do the work of the Lord. Remember that Samuel Bard, at the founding of our congregation, cited James 2:14-18 as inspiration for the name of the parish: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?... Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith."

Having said that, we do not believe that you get to heaven by doing certain things. Rather, we believe that our care for each other starts with the most foundational aspect of our faith - Love. We do good for others out of love for them, not because it's our duty. We are filled with love, and our love flows out to others in action.

So, while it is fair to say that a person who does not reach out to others (beyond family and friends) in love may have a shallow faith, it is not fair to say that specific actions are required in order to earn God's love. Conversely, it is possible for a person to do good works from an entirely unloving position - perhaps out of self-interest or a grudging sense of duty.

Again, having said that, I want to encourage you to action. Not random action for the sake of action or out of fear. Action that flows from your heart. Action that seeks to care for others - be they in the parish or larger community - or out in the world. But let your action start with God's love.

I don't have any actions to urge upon you. There are some things in this E-pistle that might be of interest, but really, what I want to urge you to do is to look within your heart to embrace the love God has for you - and then to look around you to see how that love can best be shared.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Final Fireside Chat: Thank you to all who made the 2015/2016 Season of the Fireside Chats so successful! Thanks to those who organized it, who presented, and who prepared the receptions. It may have been the best year yet!

Special Collection for Liberty Station: Our 2016 Lenten calendar focused our attention on the challenges our Veterans and active service personnel encounter. Some of the prayers on the calendar focused our attention on our homeless and at-risk veterans and their families.

Here in Dutchess County, we are grateful for the presence of Liberty Station and the great support they give to our homeless veterans by providing housing, a variety of services and hope. Liberty Station is overseen by the Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

A reminder: There is a basket and copies listing the needs of Liberty Station and SSVF in the hallway of the Parish House for your donations.

In addition to donations from the List of Needs, Liberty Station has stated a need for a variety of different types of gift cards. In order to ensure that we meet their specific needs, we are having a Special Collection this Sunday, April 3rd. This collection will provide Liberty Station the needed flexibility in distributing gift cards to their clients.

You will find Special Collection envelopes in the pews for donations - cash or checks payable to St. James' Church/memo line: Liberty Station.

Our support of Liberty Station and SSVF is ongoing with support continuing throughout the year. Please prayerfully consider a donation to Liberty Station.

Thank you - St. James' Outreach Committee

40 Under 40: Congratulations to Justin Bohlmann, who has been selected as one of Dutchess County's "40 Under 40"! He will be honored at the 11th Annual Shaker Awards ceremony, which is sponsored by the Dutchess County Chamber of Commerce and will take place on Thursday, April 28th at 5:00 pm at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. Congratulations, Justin!

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

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

Blue Mass: The Staatsburg Fire District, together with the Hyde Park Fire & Water District, are sponsoring a "Blue Mass" on Saturday, April 23, 2016, beginning at 5:00 pm at Regina Coeli Church.

A Men's Retreat: Although we do not normally advertise events for other organizations, this retreat may be of interest to some. The minister running it, the Rev. Randy Prentiss, is pastor at Arlington Reformed and retreat director at the Taconic Retreat Center (where our youth have gone to the Bridge Builders Camp). Here is what he says:

MID-HUDSON MEN'S RETREAT
April 8-9.
26 hours of RENEWAL
Get closer to God; get closer to each other.

What is this? An opportunity to get away with other guys for rest, renewal and retreat. We will do this through worshipping, laughing, playing, learning, talking, being away and being together. Guys need a break. Guys need to get away. Guys need God. Guys need each other. Its' a good thing.

When? Friday April 8, 6pm, thru Saturday April 9, 8 pm.

Where? Taconic Retreat Center at intersection of Taconic Parkway and Rte 199, Red Hook. 30 minutes from Poughkeepsie. 45 minutes from Hopewell Junction. www.taconicrcc.net for info and directions.

Who? A group of guys from a variety of local churches are putting this together, for All men 19 and older...

We hope that a group of guys from a variety of local churches will come and have a great time.

COST: \$115 includes 4 meals and 26 hours at camp. Climbing Tower and zip line additional cost (optional).

For the first time in a long time, many men from around the Hudson Valley will get together at the TACONIC RETREAT CENTER. We will be away for 26 hours to think about the things that are really important in our lives – our families, jobs, relationships, and God. Join us to reflect upon what's really important in our lives, and to have some fun.

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View the Resurrection Through a New Lens



*Gold from the Silver Screen:
Resurrection, the Core of Our Faith*
will use the films *Awakenings*, *Peaceful Warrior*, and *Woman in Gold*
to help you gain a new and more personal experience
of the resurrection this Easter season .

Co-led by the Revs. Masud Ibn Syedullah and Garrett Mettler,
this four-day retreat takes place from April 26th – 29th
at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY.

Accommodations at the monastery and all meals are included
in the \$335 registration cost.

To find out more and to register visit
www.holycrossmonastery.com/retreat-programs
or call Lori Callaway at 845-384-6660

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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

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

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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.

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.

GARDEN NEWS: We need your help! Please go to seedsofchangegrant.com and vote for the "Hyde Park Community Garden". We are competing with probably a hundred or more other gardens for grants in the amounts of \$20,000 or \$10,000. People can vote once a day from March 31- April 18.

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Join us in our
New
"Young at Heart" Garden

55+ Welcome
Grow vegetables and
Flowers to donate to
The Hyde Park Food Pantry and
Hyde Park Meals on Wheels.

For information, please call
Doug Belding at 229-0153
Or Joe Calabro at 418-0860

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What exactly is a "Young Peoples Garden" ??????

You and your family pick out a spot to plant one type of vegetable, herb

OR FLOWER

It grows... it needs to be watered.... it needs to be weeded THEN...

IT IS PICKED!

AND THEN GOES TO OUR HYDE PARK & TROUGHKEEPSIE

NEIGHBORS

AT THE HYDE PARK FOOD PANTRY & MEALS ON WHEELS

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

- 10 Christ Church, Warwick
- 11 Grace Church, La Gracia, White Plains
- 12 St. James' Church, Goshen
- 13 Diocesan Congregational Support Plan Committee
- 14 St. John's Church, Cornwall
- 15 The Chapel of St. John the Divine, Tomkins Cove
- 16 New York Altar Guild

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.

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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.

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*

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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, 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): | Dorothy Drake; Brian Rance; Virginia Mackenzie |
| Birthdays (next week): | Wendy Urban-Mead; Todd Weaver; Katherine Sanford Koch Edwards; Steven Gausepohl |
| Acolytes: | April 10: Bryanna, Amelia and Braeden April 17: Jasmine, Jaylen and Bill |
| Altar Guild: | April 10: Team Number I April 17: Team Number II |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | April 10: Angela Henry and Sue DeLorenzo April 17: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | April 10: Regina Ardini and Deirdre Mae Micker April 17: Donna Beyer and Bobbie Wells |
| Ushers: | April 10: Bill and Regina Ardini April 17: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe |
| Pledge Clerks: | April 10: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass |

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April 17: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

Parish Cycle of Prayer: April 10: Jim Oppenheimer; Brian and Scarlett O'Leary; Brian O'Leary, Jr. and Tara O'Leary

April 17: Anna Marie Pitcher; Diane Plass; Clifford and Christy Plass; Gerald and Linda Plass

Coffee Hour Hosts: April 10: Jodi Triola, Ross & Connie Eames, Pat Rooney

April 17: Deirdre Mae Micker; The Urban-Meads; The Clarks

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 9:1-6, 7-20

Psalm 30

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

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

Sermon Preached on
Second Sunday of Easter
(April 3, 2016)

"Witness to Faith and Doubt"

Doubt. It's nothing to be ashamed of. But, it's nothing to be proud of, either.

It just is.

I say this because the story of Doubting Thomas is both popular and, I think, often misapplied. Let's review. The disciples - except for Thomas - are gathered together on Sunday evening after the crucifixion. Mary has told them this crazy story about Jesus being alive, but John's gospel doesn't indicate whether or not they believe her. (In Luke and Mark, they think the women are telling tales). Then, of course, Jesus appears to them and grants them the Holy Spirit.

Of course, when Thomas returns, he doesn't believe it. It's only a full eight days later (that would be tomorrow if you're keeping track), that Jesus appears again.

He tells Thomas to touch him, and only then does Thomas believe. Jesus gives him a gentle rebuke and says blessed are those who believe without seeing.

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Now, before we dump on Thomas, let's remember that someone doubts in all of the gospels, and in them it's all - or at least some of the disciples - who doubt.

The point isn't that Thomas was the doubter but that doubt was a natural response. There's no shame for doubters.

And yet, while doubt may be understandable, it's not a place we really want to stay in. This may be where we sometimes make a mistake, using doubt to prove that we are thinking Christians who don't just blindly believe. And it's true - blind belief is not real faith, and doubt is a natural part of the process.

BUT - Jesus wants the disciples to have faith because it's only then that they - and we by extension - are able to accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God.

According to the various gospels, those great things include forgiving sins, baptizing, and spreading the word that God loves all His children.

The reading from Acts underscores the great things we can do in faith. The disciples in this passage, boldly proclaim the Gospel even in the face of certain punishment. Yet Peter is able to say, "We have to obey God above human authority - and God calls us to proclaim the forgiveness that comes from Christ."

Notice that the great things we're called to do center around forgiveness? We call that reconciliation. It is the core of our belief because our entire faith is based on God's love - and love without forgiveness is empty. Love without reconciliation is not love. It takes a lot of faith to love like that.

So doubt, while understandable, is not where we want to stay because it would get in the way of doing the work we're here to do.

But why is this passage so important? Why do all of the gospels address the doubt of the disciples?

Remember that the gospels were written many years after the resurrection. The gospel writers know that, after Jesus ascends, people are not going to see him in person anymore. As much as we would like, that's not going to happen.

And really, could you imagine what it would be like if Jesus did stick around physically forever so that we could see him now? He'd never get to go home - and we'd never get to work. We would just want to hang out with him and not do the work we are really here for which is to spread God's love with our lives.

Seriously, Jesus knows that the Good News isn't all about him being raised. His resurrection was, after all, merely a sign. (A big one, I'll grant you, but a sign nonetheless). It's a sign of God's love for us and God's call for us to love each other.

It is simply not practical or desirable for Jesus to stay here physically. But that necessarily means that we will never see him in person and we have to preach him to people who will never see him.

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If we are to preach God's love and reconciliation, we have to get beyond the physical presence of Christ. Ultimately, no matter how many people saw the risen Jesus, if our faith is based solely on seeing, then it is missing the point of why Jesus died and rose in the first place.

Which of course is that God loves us and wants us to live in love.

This passage was written for us - for all the generations to come after the disciples. They knew that doubt would be a natural part of our journeys. But they also knew that faith - trusting Jesus without seeing - is the way forward. Amen.