

St. James' E-pistle

May 2, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Thank you for laughing with me on Bright Sunday despite the higher than usual corniness content in some of the jokes. I was so pleased when a non-parishioner told me that they had heard about the palm sundae joke!

It is important for us to laugh in our faith. We are not followers of a dour, stingy God but the joyful, caring, buoyant God who desires life for us, not boredom. I read so often articles from those who no longer believe in God not because of their experiences of God himself but because of other Christians (or believers of other religions) who portray God as grumpy, angry, vengeful, petty, and just plain mean.

This is a hard world, that is true, and the more I observe people near and far, the more I understand how easy it is to lose faith based on the attitudes and behaviors of believers. But that is a futile path to go down. People will always - always - be petty, deceptive, greedy, violent ... pick your vice. Maybe we'll get better someday, but I wouldn't hold my breath.

In the meantime in this season of brightness and joy (despite the rain out my window right now) let us remember that you and I can influence how people experience their relationship with God. Through us, many who have no direct relationship with God will decide whether or not to inch closer.

If they see in us people of light, of kindness and caring, of joy, depth and groundedness that does not hide from the realities of the world - then some may want to know more. If they see in us scolds, anxious and fretful people who live in a constant state of fear or crisis, they'll probably figure knowing God won't do them much good.

The way non-Christians perceive us does matter. The other day a politician quipped that water-boarding is how we should "baptize" terrorists. This politician used the language of our primary, most essential Christian sacrament in conjunction with torture. It should go without saying that this church - and in fact every church - has condemned all forms of torture as being anathema. To encourage it as if it were a Christian virtue only makes those who are not believers distrust God even more.

So if Easter season is anything, it is a time for you and me to smile - to shine in fact. To show not only self-giving love, as Christ loves us, but to show that it brings joy and peace to know God. And if this seems foreign to you, let me offer two thoughts:

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1) The more you personally delve into your relationship with God, the more it'll show - if it seems unnatural, then perhaps that's God suggesting you dig deeper.

2) Sometimes, as our brothers and sisters in AA say, you need to "fake it till you make it."

That is, even if you don't feel that joy yet, act like it. It'll follow by and by. 😊

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Mite Box Total: The total collected last Sunday from the Lenten Mite Boxes for Habitat was \$548! That puts us over the top for our annual goal of \$500. But we want to do more, so if you forgot your Mite Box last week, don't worry! Just bring it to church this Sunday. We will have the collection bins out this week, too. Thanks and Congratulations! If we can reach \$1,000 by year's end, that will really help.

An Invitation: Please join Brian Rance and Melinda Harris at their home on May 3 at 5:00 pm for a joyous celebration of friendship and fellowship at St. James'. An invitation appears at the end of this E-pistle.

Gluten Free Communion: For those who have gluten allergies, St. James' now has Gluten Free communion hosts. Simply let me know either before the service or at the time of communion, and I'll be sure to give you one.

This Week's Inquirers Class: Our next Inquirers session will be April 30, starting at 7:30 PM. The topic will be, "What is the Episcopal Church?" As always, this is required for all who wish to be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. However, anyone who wants to learn a little more is welcome to any and all sessions. You don't even have to notify me in advance - just show up!

Wanted: New Acolytes: As the school year draws to an end, we will say goodbye to our graduating acolytes (and wish them luck in college!). This opens up a couple of spots on the acolyte list, and we want you! New acolytes need to be at least 9 years old and willing to be trained. Please see me (Fr. Chuck).

Rosary Workshop: Thursday, May 29 7:00 PM. Since the Lenten Pilgrimage and my Holy Saturday meditation came out, several people have asked me about a short workshop to learn how to both make and pray an Anglican Rosary. You may find this helpful and inspiring yourself. So, I am having a one-time workshop on Thursday, May 29 at 7:00 PM. If we find we need more time, we can plan an extra session. Once you register, I will send you an information sheet so you can prepare better.

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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Quarterly Statement Sign-Up: Reminder: If you would like to receive quarterly pledge statements, please sign up for it on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex this Sunday. Thanks.

Graveyard Tour Committee Forming: Believe it or not, it's time to start planning this year's Graveyard Tours. Already we're working on which "characters" we will visit. There are some exciting new options. Please let me (Fr. Chuck) know if you are interested in being on the planning committee. We will plan our first meeting for some time this month.

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, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, John 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:	None
Acolytes:	May 4: Eden Ciferri, Rebecca Gausepohl and Chris Santos May 11: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Monica Rizzo
Altar Guild:	May 4: Team II May 11: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	May 4: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris May 11: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	May 4: Wilma Tully/Nancy Montero May 11: Regina Ardini/Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	May 4: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne May 11: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe
Pledge Clerks:	May 4: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown

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Coffee Hour Hosts: May 11: Deb and Doug Belding
May 4: The Shahanis and Audrey Horne
May 11: Ross and Connie Eames, Jodi Triola and Pat Rooney

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 2:14a,36-41

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

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 27, 2014)

"Did You Hear the One About the Disciple?"

Did you hear the one about the disciple who went into the bar? Well, Thomas had had quite a week. First, his friends pull a mean practical joke on him by telling him they had seen the risen Christ while he was out doing the shopping. Then, it turns out they weren't joking. Jesus shows up and tells him to have more faith - right in front of the guys. He was confused and humiliated.

So, he left the other disciples and made his way to the local watering hole (the Jerusalem Oasis). He sits down on the stool, about to enjoy his drink when he hears a voice. "You are a great disciple!" He looks around, thinking maybe the Lord has reappeared, but there's nobody near him. He hears the voice again, "No really, you will spread the gospel like nobody's business."

Thomas looks around again. Nobody. He hears, "And oh, I hear you are one of the best preachers of all time!" Thomas is beside himself, looking for Jesus when the bartender walks up to him. "Is there a problem?" he asks.

"You won't believe this," says Thomas. "I keep hearing a voice tell me that I am a great disciple - I think it's the Lord, but I can't see him."

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"Oh!" says the bartender with a chuckle. "That's not God. That's them." He points to a bucket of peanuts on the bar.

"Peanuts?" asks Thomas, looking very doubtful.

"Sure," says the bartender. "The nuts are complimentary."

And thus begins our Bright Sunday sermon - one joke at a time. But I'm not taking the heat for this by myself. I asked you all for jokes, and boy did you send them in. Some of them, I'm afraid, I can't tell in public, and really, there isn't time to tell them all. More for next year!

For ease of use, let's categorize the jokes you are about to hear: "One-liners", "bible jokes in general", "sermon jokes", "Pastor jokes", and "kids say the darndest things".

Ready? I'm not, but here goes anyway:

What did the fish say when he swam into the wall? Dam!

Why wouldn't the tiger eat the clown. He tasted funny.

What did the church's gardener say to the rector when she found weeds in the garden? Let us spray.

How do you make holy water? Boil the hell out of it.

What kind of lights did Noah have on the ark? Flood lights.

Oops, I see we've strayed into bible territory, so let's jump to the bible jokes.

Speaking of Noah, did you know that he was the greatest investor in the bible? Yup. He floated his stock while everyone else went into liquidation. And who was the greatest female investor in the bible? Pharaoh's daughter. She went to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

So, who was the greatest law-breaker in the bible? Moses - he broke all ten commandments at the same time. And what car did they drive in the bible? A Honda - it says right there in the Gospel that the apostles were all in one Accord.

Okay, something a little more serious. We all know that Jesus went around everywhere preaching and healing. You may not have realized that this was expensive. He knelt to pray so much, and people kept trying to touch him so much that he practically wore out a robe a week. He kept going back to the same tailor to get it fixed, and the guy did a wonderful job.

Finally, one day, the tailor said, "Lord Jesus, with your talent for getting a crowd to do what you say, and my talent sewing, we could go into business. We could sell loads of clothes. Why, we'd be rich!"

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Amused, Jesus said, "Really? A clothing store? And what would we call it?"

"That's easy," said his friend, "Lord and Tailor."

You know, if you're going to be a preacher, you really have to study the scriptures - as you can see above. And still, sermons can be hard. A boy was watching his father the rector write a sermon one day. "How do you know what to say?" he asked.

"Why, God tells me," said the dad.

"Oh," said the boy, "Then why do you keep hitting DELETE?"

Then there was my colleague this past week. On Easter Monday his wife flopped down into a chair and said, "Boy, am I exhausted!" He looked at her in disbelief and said, "You're exhausted? I just had to preach sermons for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and two completely different Easter sermons on Sunday. That's five sermons in four days! What makes you so tired?"

She looked up at him and said, "Honey, I had to listen to them all."

There was a boy who was leaving church, and as he shook hands with the priest, he handed the man a five dollar bill. The priest smiled and said, "Thank you, but why didn't you just put it in the offering plate when it went by?"

The boy said, "I figured you needed it more than the church. Mommy says you're the poorest preacher she ever heard."

Ahh, the life of a pastor. Sermons aside, it's a fascinating life: There was a new pastor in town, and he was making the rounds, introducing himself especially to the older parishioners who didn't get out much. He knocked on the door of one woman, and after she let him, she showed him a seat but then excused herself for a few minutes.

Sitting on the sofa, he noticed a dish of peanuts on the coffee table. Thinking how nice it was of her to set them out, and feeling a bit hungry since he had missed lunch, the pastor took a small handful. They hit the spot. A bit later, she was still not there, so he took a few more. Then a few more. Just then, the parishioner returned to the living room and sat down. She said, "I apologize for my absence - my dentures were causing me trouble. Can I get you anything?"

"No thank you," said the new pastor, "Though I did have some of your peanuts." He looked down and gave an embarrassed smile. "Oh dear, it looks like I ate nearly all of them."

"Oh, that's okay," she said. "Ever since I got these dentures, I can't really chew them, so I just suck the chocolate off."

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That was nothing compared to the pastor who was making cold calls to parishioners homes - just showing up unannounced. He knocked on one door, but nobody answered even though he could tell someone was definitely there. He waited a little while then took out a business card and wrote "Revelation 3:30: on the back. For those of you who don't know, Revelation 3:30 says: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." He figured that would get his message across. But the next Sunday, he found that very same card in the collection plate. His scripture verse was crossed out, and in its place was written "Genesis 3:10."I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Pastors need vacations like everyone else, and with winter still hanging on in the upper midwest, one pastor from Minneapolis decided to take a trip to Florida. But, with busy schedules and booked flights the way they are these days, he and his wife couldn't get on the same flight. He decided to go down one day early and make sure everything was all set. When he got to the hotel room, he noticed they had free Wi-Fi, so he got out his laptop and wrote a quick e-mail to his wife to let her know he was there. Unfortunately, he got one letter wrong on the e-mail address, and instead of going to his wife, it went to a woman who had just come back from her husband's funeral. The new widow had just turned on her computer, thinking she would read some notes of condolence. Instead, she saw the erroneous e-mail, screamed and fainted. This is what it said: Subject: I've arrived. "Hi Honey, I know you're surprised to hear from me, but I just got here and found out they have free we-fi! Anyway, I'm all checked in and am preparing for your arrival tomorrow. Can't wait to see you. Your loving husband. PS. It sure is hot down here.

Anyway, Let's look at what the kids have to say. Since we have several weddings this month, there was a little girl at a wedding recently. She whispered to her mother: "Why is the bride wearing white?"

"Because white is the color of happiness, and she's is so happy she's getting married."

The girl thought about this a moment then asked, "So, why is the groom wearing black?"

Here are a few letters to God kids have written. :

Dear God, I went to this wedding, and they kissed right in the church! Is that okay?

Dear God, in Sunday School they told us what you do. Who does it when you are on vacation?

Dear God, how did you know you were God?

Dear God, I read the Bible. What does "begat" mean? Nobody will tell me. Love, Allison

Dear God, on Halloween I am going to wear a Devil's costume, is that all right with you?

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Dear God, are you really invisible, or is that just a trick?

Dear God, is it true my father won't get into Heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house?

Dear God, did you mean for giraffe to look like that, or was it an accident?

Dear God, I like the Lord's Prayer the best of all. Did you have to write it a lot or did you get it right the first time? I have to write everything I ever write over again.

Dear God, it's OK that you made different religions but don't you get mixed up sometimes?

You don't have to get mixed up on Bright Sunday. All you have to remember is that God loves you - that the joke is on the devil who thought death would be the final word - and the Christ is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND
A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDSHIP
AND FELLOWSHIP
FOR MEMBERS OF ST. JAMES' PARISH
AT THE HOME OF
BRIAN RANCE AND MELINDA HARRIS (AND WILLIAM)

WHERE: 9 MARSHALL ROAD
(CORNER OF MARSHALL AND NETHERWOOD ROADS (CR-41))

WHEN: 5-8 P.M. ON SATURDAY, MAY 3RD

BEVERAGES (INCLUDING WINE, BEER AND SODA)
AND A LIGHT MEAL WILL BE SERVED

PLEASE RSVP BY E-MAIL TO
BRIAN.RANCE@FRESHFIELDS.COM
OR BY TELEPHONE TO
212 360 1854