

St. James' E-pistle

May 23, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

It seems amazing that this month is almost over. Not only the month but the school year. As with all who have gone before, I marvel at how time seems to speed ever faster with each passing year.

This hit home earlier this week when we were going through the wedding rehearsal of Justin Bohlmann and his fiancé Danielle. Justin was nine when I came to St. James'. Moreover, most of the current high school students of the parish were either infants or not even born when our family moved to Hyde Park. No that's the relentless march of time!

What does this mean for us in our walk with Christ?

Undoubtedly, it depends on who you are, and maybe how old you are. At my stage in life, it seems to mean that God gives us a certain number of days in which to learn the lessons of life. Since the summary of the Law (which Jesus extolls) is to Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, it would appear that the lesson we are here to learn is how to love. More to the point, we may well be here to learn how to love when it is not easy.

That certain number of days grows shorter every year, though we never know how many we have. What we do know is that we have today. We have the right now.

These rapid-paced days remind me that if I am going to get to my lessons, if I'm going to learn how to love others and God in all the uncertainty of the world, now is the time to get going. That love means praying for people near and far. It means helping meet their needs when they can't do so themselves - without worrying about whether they deserve it. It means being there to listen to them when they need an ear - no matter who they are.

And so on. You know the difficulty of real love. It seeks the best for those around you.

Too often, we spend our days planning or fretting - or reminiscing about the good old days when things were better. There is nothing new about saying this, but it remains true: Today is what God has given us to care about. Live in the present. Love in the present. Not only will we enjoy life more fully, but we'll come that much closer to God.

When I live in the present, I don't worry how fast time is passing me by. It's not.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Diocese

Prayers for Nigerian Terror Victims: Please consider using this prayer in your daily devotions as you remember the more than 200 girls kidnapped in Nigeria by the terrorist group Boko Haram. While it is true that there are millions in equally desperate situations and facing equally unjust treatment, focusing on one specific case of injustice and evil may help us remember all who suffer similarly. (This prayer comes by way of the Rev. Steve Holton for the Episcopal Muslim Relations Committee).

Prayer for the kidnapped Nigerian girls May 2014

O God, we cry out to you
for the lives and the freedom
of the 276 kidnapped girls in Nigeria.
In their time of danger and fear,
pour out your strong Spirit for them.
Make a way home for them in safety.
Make a way back for them
to the education that will lift them up.
Hold them in the knowledge
that they are not captive slaves,
they are not purchased brides,
but they are your beloved daughters ,
and precious in your sight.
Change the hearts and minds of their kidnappers
and of all who choose violence against women and girls.
Cast down the mighty from their seat,
and lift up the humble and meek,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: We have been asked if we can publish the names of the churches of the diocese that we pray for in church each Sunday. We're happy to do so. 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." Here are the diocesan intercessions for the week of May 25-31:

25 On The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary, we pray that we might grow in our ability to announce good news.

26 The sextons of the diocese and those who care for our buildings

27 Those who teach in the Christian Formation programs of the diocese

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28 The Church of the Regeneration, Pine Plains
29 The Cathedral School, Manhattan
30 The Order of Saint Helena
31 The Church Club of New York

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.

The News of the Church

Congratulations Justin and Danielle! Congratulations to Justin Bohlmann and Danielle Mackey, who will be married this Saturday, May 24! May God bless you and make your home a haven of blessing and peace for many years to come!

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 at 7:00 PM: At the request of several parishioners, I have designed a workshop on how to make and pray with an Anglican Rosary. You may find this helpful and inspiring yourself. This one-time workshop will take place on Thursday, May 29 starting 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.

Mid Hudson Region Work Day: The Mid Hudson Region of the Diocese is trying something new and invites you to be part of it. Please join Episcopalians from around the region as they converge on Trinity Church in Saugerties for a couple of hours of garden / landscape work and lunch.

This experiment builds on the idea that churches of our region are "all in this together," and expands on the age-old concept of the parish work day. The first work day will be in Saugerties, but future work days will take place all over the region - maybe even St. James' if we find the right project.

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So put on your work clothes, get your gardening gloves and tools, and just show up at Trinity Church (arrive 9:00 AM - everyone's done by noon).

Questions? Let me (Fr. Chuck) know.

Book to be published this month: Later this month, the Hudson Valley News will publish a book of Fr. Chuck's Columns from his weekly "God, Life, and Everything" column. The cost is still to be determined, but we'll make it known as soon as it's available. If you want to reserve a copy, please e-mail Fr. Chuck.

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.

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, Pat Rooney, John Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, The Right Reverend E. Don Taylor, Gloria Veach, 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.

Birthdays:	David Webb, Robin Bohlmann, Brian Kinne, Morgan Kinne, Alan Mueser and Daniel McGlynn
Acolytes:	May 25: Mike Minter, Nancy Montero and Skye O'Halloran June 1: Eden Ciferri, Rebecca Gausepohl and Chris Santos
Altar Guild:	May 25: Team I June 1: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	May 25: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch June 1: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	May 25: Donna Beyer/Deirdre Mae Micker

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Ushers: June 1: Patty Caswell/Justin Bohlmann
May 25: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher
June 1: Kathie Champion and Mary Gabel
Pledge Clerks: May 25: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell
June 1: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
Coffee Hour Hosts: May 25: Deb and Doug Belding
June 1: Audrey Horne and The Shahanis

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 66:7-18

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

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

Sermon Preached on
Fifth Sunday of Easter
(May 18, 2014)

"Tripping on Jesus"

When I came up with the title "Tripping on Jesus," it was innocent enough. But then someone who shall remain nameless said, "You realize that tripping means getting stoned, don't you? And I don't mean stoned like St. Stephen."

So, what do I mean with tripping? Two basic things: Jesus can bring us on a trip that will lead us closer to God, to the very presence of God, in fact. Or, as St. Peter indicates, Jesus can ask more than we are willing to believe or choose. And then we stumble, falter, or just plain fall.

What trips us up? Let me suggest three things.

#1 is Belief. (I hear the following arguments all the time from people working hard to convince me that there is no God: It's naive to say somebody created us. Why would a good God do bad things? God killing his own son makes no sense. Jesus as the only way to God makes no sense.

For what it's worth, these are good questions when asked honestly. I encourage questioning. However, What gets me is the arrogance of the questioners (though sometimes they're

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questioning but stating). They say these things as if they were brand new - as if I myself and virtually every priest I know hasn't asked a thousand times. What gets me is the accusation that we believe mindlessly. The exact opposite is true - we struggle daily with belief.

#2 is usually difficulty in trusting where God's taking you because it may not be what you thought or wanted. (Here's a tiny example from yesterday's consecration: the day before yesterday, I was asked to serve as a marshal. My reaction was surprise and panic, especially since I had no idea what a marshal was. But in the end I decided it was what they needed, and if I just did it, it would work out all right. Turns out a marshal is just a kind of usher, so it was an easy job. AND I got a great seat.

St. Stephen in today's reading from Acts is a more real example. Or the woman in Sudan who was recently condemned to death for supposedly converting to Christianity, and who will not switch to Islam. That's really living through the difficulty of our faith.

The #3 reason for tripping on Jesus is not wanting to love as he loves. (When Jesus says he's the only way, does he mean that only people who claim he is Lord will go to heaven? Or does he mean only those who seek to love as he loves are heaven-bound? I suggest the latter. We all stumble on this because to love as Jesus loves is nigh on impossible. Jesus asks us to give our whole selves, not just bits.

BUT the real stumbling happens when we pervert our faith into something completely opposite of Christ. Ever hear of the Gospel of Prosperity? They claim Christ is lord - at least in words. But the Gospel of Prosperity is a self-serving teaching that God wants Christians to be rich... and you will be if you pray hard enough, give to the church enough, believe enough. If you're poor, it's your own fault. It's because you're not a true believer. You deserve poverty. This is wrong, and those who embrace it are in the process of stumbling hard.

Does tripping on Jesus - whether through rejection of God or fear or perversion of the Gospel - mean rejection BY Jesus? Does it mean a one-way ticket to hell? I am not God and don't know. For what it's worth, I'm more in the camp of C.S. Lewis who wrote in *The Great Divorce* that the journey is never over, and even those who wind up in hell have the chance every day - are invited every day - to come home. In fact, in his story, a big purple bus bound for heaven comes down to hell daily and stands there with its doors open, waiting. Most days it goes back up empty. Most people simply choose not to go, preferring the boorish, miserable self-involvement that is hell over the letting go of heaven.

Our scripture stories today reflect our lives. We stumble and fall a lot because we close our minds, we fear, we get caught up in OUR desires to the exclusion of all around us. But when we can open our minds and hearts, when we let go of fear, when we can look up enough to follow

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the path Christ is laying before us, we will go to amazing places. And oh, what a trip it will be.
Amen.