

# St. James' E-pistle

## May 30, 2014

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I will not be at St. James' this Sunday.

But I need you to be there!

I need you to gather together to pray for me. Don't pray alone at home, pray together because there is more power when we come together in prayer.

Why do I need you to come together in prayer? Because this Sunday I will be taking part in a masochistic rite of passage with Nicholas called a "Tough Mudder." For some reason that escapes me, this 10-mile challenge course in the mountains of Vermont, modeled after special forces training exercises, seemed like a good father/son outing. Let me emphasize "seemed."

There are many reasons I'm uneasy about this adventure. One is that I would prefer not to be doing this on Sunday morning.

Another is that I would prefer not to be running up a mountain (Mt. Snow ski slope). Or to be running at all. Or to be diving into a pool of ice water (one of 19 obstacles we will pass through). Or get off the sofa.

But we often find ourselves doing things we would not prefer to do, and if we are wise, we open ourselves to the possibility that something good might just happen. I certainly foresee a sense of accomplishment at the end, a good time with my son, and maybe a feeling of moderate confidence.

At the very least, when faced with challenges, we can prepare ourselves and trust. There's got to be a life lesson in that.

For my part, I have gone to the gym a lot more lately, so I've done what I can there. I have also located a church near our hotel that has services early enough so I can worship before the big event. This is important to me because there - bolstered by your prayers for me, I can pray better for you and for all who participate in this experience.

To be fair, people pay good money to do these challenge courses. Tough Mudder is just one of many such as the "Spartan Race", the "Warrior Dash" and the "Civilian Military Combine", so there must be some attraction. But I will run (or trudge) up that mountain thinking of you all, and wishing I were with you.

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On the other hand, maybe I'll have the time of my life - you never know until you make yourself open to the wonder that lies ahead.

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 June 1-June 7:

- 1 Diocesan deputies and representatives who attend the meetings and councils of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion
- 2 The Church of Our Savior, Manhattan
- 3 Holyrood Church, Manhattan

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- 4 The Church of St. Edward the Martyr, Manhattan
- 5 St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, Manhattan
- 6 St. Andrew's Church, The Bronx
- 7 St. Stephen's Church, Woodlawn, The Bronx

**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**

**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).

**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.

So put on your work clothes, get your gardening gloves and tools, and just show up at Trinity Church on Saturday, May 31st (arrive 9:00 AM - everyone's done by noon).

Questions? Let me (Fr. Chuck) know.

**Book Coming Next Week:** Fr. Chuck's book, "God, Life, and Everything", is coming out next Tuesday! The book is listed at \$12.95. If you want to reserve a copy, please e-mail Fr. Chuck. Talks are in process for a book signing at the library.

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**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.

**Let's Form A Walkathon Team!** If you want to walk with St. James' team for the Rural and Migrant Ministries Walkathon on June 7, please contact Fr. Chuck as soon as possible. You can also call the parish office! If you can't walk but would like to sponsor walkers, please contact Fr. Chuck!

**Boy Scouts:** Want breakfast before taking part in the Walkathon? Boy Scout Troop 80 is having a pancake breakfast fundraiser at Applebee's on June 7 from 8-10 a.m. Tickets are \$5. Raffle. Contact Barbara Slegel at 889-4041 or any member of Troop 80 for tickets.

**Recognition Sunday:** June 8 is a **Red Letter Day**. Not only is it the Feast of Pentecost, but it is also Recognition Sunday at the 10:00 AM service. If you are graduating from High School or college this year, please let Fr. Chuck know ASAP if you plan on being in church that day. All students and acolytes are requested to be there with their families so we can properly honor their work.

The 8:00 AM service on June will be at the Chapel.

**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, Doris Mack, 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: Marge Gibson-O'Mara, Alexandra Burkhardt, Barabara Slegel, Thomas Gabel and Thomas Ruder

Acolytes: June 1: Eden Ciferri, Rebecca Gausepohl and Chris Santos

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	June 8: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Monica Rizzo
Altar Guild:	June 1: Team I June 8: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	June 1: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth June 8: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	June 1: Patty Caswell/Justin Bohlmann June 8: Regina Ardini/Sophie Ciferri
Ushers:	June 1: Kathie Champion and Mary Gabel June 8: Andrew and Tonya Hall
Pledge Clerks:	June 1: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown June 8: Deb and Doug Belding
Coffee Hour Hosts:	June 1: Audrey Horne and The Shahanis June 8: Ross and Connie Eames, Jodi Triola and Pat Rooney

### **This Week's Lectionary**

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

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

Sermon Preached on  
Sixth Sunday of Easter  
(May 25, 2014)

"Never An Orphan"

Two points from today's scriptures.

The first point is that you are no alone.

The second is, you don't have to be afraid to say so.

In just a few days we will observe the Feast of the Ascension. In our Gospel, we see Jesus preparing to leave his disciples just weeks after he had returned to them from the dead. They were confused as to why he had to leave, and frankly, they were scared. They'd thought things

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would go back to the way they were when he was leading them, taking them up to the mountain for lessons, performing miracles... And now they would be alone, abandoned like orphans.

But he says, no, you will never be orphans. I will not leave you alone. When I leave, I'll send you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will be your advocate, your power, your strength, your creativity and inspiration. What's more, I'm giving you each other. You will support and love each other. This will be enough to do what you need to do, and it will be enough to remind you how good it is.

Okay, I paraphrase. But this is the essence of it. We are not alone here - God is within us, says Jesus, "the Spirit will abide with you and in you." He says, "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

So the first thing Jesus does is let them know they are not alone because the Holy Spirit is coming and will be within them forever.

After they receive this courage and power, what next? Peter - you remember he was probably the oldest of the disciples who were all just young guys - gives words of encouragement. Honestly, it's not entirely clear that Peter wrote this letter, and it's pretty certain he wasn't writing to the other ten apostles. But it was written by a very early leader to a frightened group of disciples facing persecution for sharing their faith.

What he says to them is to not be afraid but "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

It was a dangerous business for those who shared their faith. For us, it can feel dangerous as well. The number of people who go to church is shrinking world wide. The number of people openly hostile to any idea of God is growing. Sometimes, you feel like trying to talk about God is a minefield that's just easier to avoid.

For what it's worth, I've had people talk to me about God in ways that have made me want to run and hide, so I get not wanting to be beat over the head - almost mugged - with what doesn't sound like very good news at all.

Yet there is this call to share what we have heard and felt and know in our hearts. Peter does not say to go out and mug people with the bible. He says be ready to make a defense for the hope that's in you. And to do so with gentleness.

To sum up so far: Christ says you are not alone. Peter says to share this news without fear when the time comes.

But how do you know when the time comes? How do you know anyone will hear you?

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Paul deals with this in our reading in Acts. For background, he's been in Athens a few days and has been talking about Jesus to anyone who will listen. A group of philosophers ask him to come to the Areopagus to explain his new philosophy. The Areopagus was a court, but there's no sense that Paul was in danger here, only that it was a public forum where he could speak, and they could ask questions. What Paul says is in fact, our motivation for sharing our faith. He starts off by talking about a shrine he saw "To an unknown God."

Paul perceives that he is talking to a group of people who are looking for something, though they don't know what. They build a shrine to "whatever's out there," but they have no idea what. Sounds a lot like people we might know: they say they believe in a higher power but no specific God, no organized religion. Frankly, people have no idea what they believe...but they know there's something, and they need it. And so they spin their spiritual wheels, stuck. Paul saw this and had compassion for the people he addressed. They were going around with this vague sense of longing and loss, and he wanted to let them know they were no longer alone, no longer lost, no longer condemned to worship an object made with human hands which they knew had no power.

We live in the same kind of world, people vaguely feeling a longing for something more but not knowing what. Which means there are a lot of people looking for God, and it is our compassion for them, our love for everyone in this wonderful world, that moves us to speak, to share the hope that we have.

And to come back full circle, our hope is that we are not alone, not orphans. We can know this by looking within, where God's Holy Spirit resides - and by looking around you where your support team is always there.

In the end, the Good News you're called to share is that we are never orphans, never abandoned. God is with us and within us. It is difficult, even painful to share this in a world that doesn't believe you. But you can do it because you are supported by the strength and joy and creativity of the Holy Spirit as well as millions of brothers and sisters who love you. You can do it because you, too, are never an orphan - and your family is right here with you. Amen.