

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This week I made a presentation as part of the Bard Lifelong Learning Institute's religion class. My topic was "Pilgrimage: Prayer in Motion." Frankly, out of the four sessions I've taught for the institute, this was the easiest. All I had to do was distill down the paper I wrote on pilgrimage during my sabbatical and then turn it into a slide show.

My biggest concern about the topic was that it might not interest a group of seniors (the Lifelong Learning Institute was created for senior citizens who want to keep learning. The courses cover just about anything under the sun.). I was foolishly worried that those who have mobility issues would be turned off by a subject based on lots of walking.

I was decidedly wrong.

Not only were they fascinated with the topic - and the idea that pilgrimage is a walking prayer, not just a way to get to a holy site - but some were ready to go out and make pilgrimage now. At the end of the session, three of the participants gave me their e-mail addresses so I could give them more information on how to be part of the next Rail Trail Pilgrimage!

I am convinced that the Rail Trail Pilgrimage we undertook in March will have a lasting impact on our religious community because people are constantly looking for ways to deepen their relationship with God. Given that we get so caught up in the online world - a recent report out says that kids in some countries get no more than 3 hours per week outside - walking pilgrimage has even more significance today. It gets us away from the world we have created for ourselves and into a completely different reality if only for a few days.

At any rate, it was a pleasant surprise to find such interest in pilgrimage. We are busy planning the next pilgrimage for late summer/early fall. If you have interest in participating, please let me know - I'm beginning to compile a list of those who want to learn more about it.

In the meantime, there are many ways to deepen your relationship with God. Come to the Anglican Rosary workshop and learn how you can use it for your prayer. Walk our labyrinth (did you forget we have one?), sit in the church by yourself any day you want - it's open during the day. God gives us infinite ways to reach out - only you can choose to do so. But in whatever way you choose, let me know, and I'll be there by your side.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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May 9, 2014

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

Consecration: Please keep in your prayers Bishop-elect Alan K. Shin as he is consecrated next Saturday (May 17) as our next Bishop suffragan. Pray also for our parish representatives who will take part in the consecration. If you would like to attend you can simply travel to the cathedral on your own. A bus is being organized through Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, and you may be able to purchase a seat on that bus (\$60 including round trip and a lunch at a NYC restaurant). If anyone wants to carpool, that may also be possible.

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

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 Minters: Congratulations to Mike and Annette Minter who will renew their marriage vows this Saturday (at 2:00 PM). It is always a joy to celebrate the lasting love of matrimony and to offer up our encouragement to them as they recommit themselves to each other.

Happy Mothers' Day: Happy Mothers' Day to all our mothers! It is no small thing to take on the challenge and ministry that is motherhood. For those who have done so, may this Sunday be a day for you to sit back and relax a bit - and enjoy the love of those around you.

This Week's Inquirers Class: Our next Inquirers session will be May 14 at 7:30 PM. The topic this week is "**The Old Testament: Part I**" (there will be three sessions on the Old Testament). 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!

Tag Sale: Also on May 17, St. James' is having a tag sale to coordinate with the town-wide tag sale. It is an important fundraiser for the ministries of the church. If you are not going to the consecration, please consider coming to the tag sale.

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.

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

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.

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, 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:	Diane Webb
Acolytes:	May 11: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Monica Rizzo May 18: Gage Minter, Jasmine Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead
Altar Guild:	May 11: Team III May 18: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	May 11: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch May 18: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	May 11: Regina Ardini/Bobbie Wells May 18: Russell Urban-Mead/Judy Douglass

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

Ushers:	May 11: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe May 18: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	May 11: Deb and Doug Belding May 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Coffee Hour Hosts:	May 11: Ross and Connie Eames, Jodi Triola and Pat Rooney May 18: The Gausepohls, Deirdre Mae Micker and Leslie Quick

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

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

Sermon Preached on
Third Sunday of Easter
(May 4, 2014)

"Enough To Go On"

In order to understand what I'm about to say, you may have to refer to the date on your bulletin. Ready? "Happy Star Wars Days. May the 4th be with you." I know, it's not even Bright Sunday anymore, but come on - the clues were all there.

Now, if that seemed too obscure for you, it probably means you're not what one might call a geek. But it could just mean that you are alive because life is often like that. We shamble through life looking for clues as which direction we're headed or what we're supposed to do next.

Sometimes life is like one of those mystery shows where you've got a crime to solve or a puzzle to put together, but all you've got is a lock of hair or a smudged fingerprint or maybe a glimpse of someone in a window. You think, there's no way you solve a mystery with that little information.

Of course, they always manage to solve the problem in an hour on TV. But even in real life, it's amazing how far you can get with an obscure clue here and there.

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

In today's gospel for example, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus got the tiniest glimpse of Jesus - and then he vanished.

Personally, this story has always bothered me. First of all, why did Jesus have to remain hidden all day when he was walking with these poor guys. And then, just as he reveals himself, he vanishes! Couldn't he have hung around for awhile and let them enjoy sitting in the presence of the risen Christ? Wouldn't you want to?

I mean, they've been grieving for days, then they've been confused by rumors - and now, here he is! Can't they just hang onto him for a little while?

The answer is no. They didn't get to cling to Jesus and keep him for themselves. They had a momentary encounter with the divine - and that was enough to go on. They didn't need more.

So, what exactly did they get? Four things - four things we can learn from them. First, we can recognize the fact that Christ is with us all along. When the disciples are looking at each other after Jesus vanished, they're saying "what just happened?" But the first thing they say is, "Did you notice how when we were walking with him, our hearts were burning? Now that we can look back on it, we recognize that it was him teaching us." Retrospect is a great gift. Reflection is a great gift. Looking back at what God has already been doing is a great gift.

Another part of that gift is that we do not do it alone. They look at each other and talked - together.

The next thing that we can learn from these two is that clinging to Jesus is not going to work. They didn't need it. They had that one bright flash, and then he was gone. You may not believe this, but the number of people in this congregation who have shared real miracles in their lives is pretty astounding. Those real miracles are fleeting wisps, here one moment and then gone. You spend the rest of your life trying to figure out what they meant, but you don't need to cling onto them. That's the lesson. That one glimpse of Jesus was all the disciples needed to carry them back onto the road.

When we have these moments... that's enough. They're enough to let us know that Christ is with us. Jesus had things to do - and now we know that those two disciples had things to do, too. It was not for them to dwell in the house of the Lord forever - at that moment. It was for them to get up and go. It's the same for us. When we have these magical moments of clarity, of divine experience, we're not meant to then sit with them forever but to have our hearts ignited and then get up and go.

But we don't do it alone. Where did they go? To the other disciples. They went to them so they could share their story and to hear the stories of the others. One of the reasons we go to church in the first place is not to punch the spiritual clock but to be the community of God together so we can share our experiences of God together and be strengthened by it together.

St. James' E-pistle

May 9, 2014

One of the other things we learn, is that Jesus did give them something concrete to hang onto - that they can do over and over again. Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Christ gave us this wonderful sacrament of Holy Communion - and trust me on this; if there is any moment in church where Christ breaks through, it's communion. When you receive communion, you look at the altar or the plaques or your hands - I don't know. But I look at you. I see it in the eyes of any number of you - not everyone, of course, but everyone someone has that light in their eyes. For someone, Christ has broken through if only for a brief glimpse.

So in a sense, that's one of the greatest gifts we have - one of the greatest lessons we can learn from these disciples. We don't get all the clues to life: we get just enough to go on. But we get each other, we get our own stories that we can reflect on, and every week we get the breaking of the bread.

So, in a few minutes, confused as we all are, come up to communion with the knowledge that we don't have it all, but we have enough to go on. And maybe, today, Christ will be known to you in the breaking of the bread. Amen.