

# St. James' E-pistle

## July 11, 2014

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I thought this week I would answer a question that has been asked several times in the past few weeks. And in answering the question, we'll look at something larger you probably don't notice much.

The question: "Why don't we say "Alleluia, Alleluia" at the end of the service anymore?"

The answer: Rubrics.

Say what?

Rubrics are the little "rules" in italics in the prayer book. In olden days, they used to be red print (which is where the word rubric came from), but then some genius discovered that italics are cheaper to print. Anyway, just look through your prayer book and you'll see those little guys everywhere. They are what guides our worship, and technically, they are more than just suggestions. As worship leaders, we are bound to adhere to them as closely as possible.

So, you'll notice at the end of the service, after the post-communion prayer, the rubrics say, *The Bishop, when present, or the Priest, may bless the people.*

*The Deacon, or the Celebrant, dismisses them with these words*

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

*People* Thanks be to God.

Alternate versions of the dismissal are also listed. Then the following rubrics apply:

*From the Easter Vigil through the Day of Pentecost "Alleluia, alleluia" may be added to any of the dismissals.*

*The People respond* Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia.

In other words, we say Alleluia, alleluia through the Easter Season which this year ended on June 8 (Pentecost). After that, there is not really a provision for saying it - at least on the part of the deacon or priest.

Frankly, I don't like it. I love saying Alleluia, which means "Praise the Lord," and it feels like Lent all over again when Pentecost comes and we no longer say it at the dismissal. This is especially strange since it's perfectly okay to say Alleluia in other places like the breaking of the bread where it says, *In Lent, Alleluia is omitted, and may be omitted at other times except during Easter Season.* What's more, our church's teaching is that every Sunday is a celebration of Easter in a way.

And I know parishioners love saying that double Alleluia! It gives a joyful, life-affirming exit into the world - and also acts as a signal for everyone to give that wonderful, joyous AMEN which sends us out in glorious fashion.

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But the mysterious world of rubrics is not very forgiving - if it says, "is" or "shall," then it is or shall be.

EXCEPT....

There is another magic word in the rubrics: "May." And that word is subject to interpretation. When the rubrics say, "May", then whatever it refers to is not required. For example, there is a little rubric that says, *During the ministration of Communion, hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung.*

We don't have to sing a hymn, psalm, or anthem - or anything at all. But we may.

I suppose, if I were a legalist, I could argue that the rubrics don't expressly forbid saying the double Alleluia after the dismissal - they just say that between Easter and Pentecost it may be added. How would you interpret that?

Again, my preference is that we say the double Alleluia because it makes every Sunday what it ought to be: praise to God. Again, what do you think?

There are a couple of Episcopal online forums, and I believe I will throw this question out to the community. I'll also turn to my liturgical experts and see what they say.

But until that's cleared up, our deacon may skip the "Alleluia, Alleluia" at the end of the dismissal. I realize that can be confusing and make you uncertain what to do next.

Fortunately, we at St. James' have a brilliant, wonderful option.

When the deacon gives the dismissal (and there are several options given in the prayer book, so you have to listen carefully), you can answer as loud as you can, "Thanks be to God. AMEN!"

Shout out that AMEN because it's part of who we are at St. James' - a community that knows how to thank God and go out into the world as Christ's brothers and sisters, all joyful servants. That AMEN says it all - Let it be so.

Whether we say the double Alleluia or not - Thanks be to God. Amen.

In Christ,

Chuck+

PS. While we are on the subject, why not include in your summer reading some of those rubrics of the prayer book. You might think that's pretty boring, but you'll also find a fascinating world which will make you reconsider how you worship and why you do certain things you've never thought about.

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### **The News of the Diocese**

**Still Pray 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:** 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.diocesen.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

- 12** The Church of Sts. John, Paul & Clement, Mount Vernon
- 13** Christ's Church, Rye
- 14** St. John's Church, Getty Square, Yonkers
- 15** **St. James' Church, Hyde Park**

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- 16 Christ Church, Red Hook
- 17 St. Anne's Church, Washingtonville
- 18 The Congregational Development Commission
- 19 The Jacob Perlow Chaplaincy, Manhattan

### **The News of the Church**



**Book Now On Sale:** Fr. Chuck's book, "God, Life, and Everything" is now available for purchase! It will be in the parish hall after church at a cost of \$12.95. (plus \$1.05 tax). Checks should be made out to "The Hudson Valley News." Come on over to coffee hour and meet the author! He will be happy to autograph it if you wish. ;-)

**DEADLINE for Rail Trail Pilgrimage:** The deadline is approaching to register for the Rail Trail Pilgrimage (September 13-14). **In order to participate, you must register by August 10.** We start in Hopewell Junction and end at in the Town of Lloyd, spending the night at St. Andrew's Church in Poughkeepsie. Last Spring it was a spiritual powerhouse. There is a non-refundable \$15 deposit required to hold your spot (refundable only if we have to cancel). Because of the difficulty in finding supply clergy, this deadline cannot be changed.

**ACTORS! Auditions Being Held for Graveyard Tours:** Auditions have been set for roles in this year's Graveyard Tours. A closed audition - for parishioners only - is Tuesday, July 8 at 7:00 PM at the Chapel. The second audition, is Tuesday, July 15, also at 7:00 and also at the Chapel. There are seven dates for tours: October 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, and 31. The goal is to have two actors for every role. If you would like to act, please contact director Andrew Burgreen at [jabjen@juno.com](mailto:jabjen@juno.com).

**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).

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**Tree Stand For Free:** Need a Christmas Tree stand for a **large** tree? Deirdre Mae Micker is moving and needs to reduce, so she has just such a stand for the first taker. Just give her a yell!

**Hudson Valley Home Matters:** Hudson Valley Home Matters is seeking both volunteers and members. It is an organization devoted to providing simple services to adults over 50 through volunteers. There is an annual fee for membership. If you are interested in volunteering or seeking the services of Hudson Valley Home Matters, you can get more information from their website at <http://www.hvhomematters.org> or by calling at 845-452-4846. If you know Herb and Barbara Sweet, they are volunteers. You can contact them as well.

**Survey Participants Wanted:** Boston University School of Theology is doing a study of adults who have come to faith - or a renewed faith - in the last three years. The school has reached out to churches across the country including our own. I have been on their web site to see if the survey is legitimate, and I am satisfied that it is. If you fit the description below and are interested, please read their statement below.

"We would like to offer the survey to adults in your congregation (aged 18 and over) who have made a new religious commitment, conversion, or profession of faith within the last three years (since January 1, 2011), even if that happens to be a "return" to faith from an earlier commitment in their lives. We are relying on clergy such as you to forward the online link to that survey ([www.bu.edu/cpt/fft](http://www.bu.edu/cpt/fft)) to those individuals in your congregation who fall into that category. In most cases, you would be the one who best knows who they are. All responses will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. We also have hard copies that I can send you in most major languages for those who prefer not to take the survey online or who are unable to do so. If you will let me know by return email, I will send you any surveys you may need. The online survey can also be taken in multiple languages as persons directed to it will easily discover."

**Plastic Bags Needed:** The Community Garden is starting to harvest our early crops. We need more plastic bags to transport and distribute the vegetables at the Food Pantry. Please put them in the bin in the narthex during the growing season. Thank you.

**Gluten Free Communion:** Remember, if you have gluten allergies/intolerance, we have gluten free communion hosts. Please let Fr. Chuck know if you would like that option.

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**Please keep the following people in your prayers:**

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Ashley Coyne, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Kasey Gaulin, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Andy Hall, Harold Hall, Liz Handman, 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, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Bobbie Wells, 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 (week ending July 13):	Kenneth Tompkins, Sophia Mungo, Brooke Schroeder, Elizabeth Handman, Judy Douglass, Nancy Montero and Eden Ciferri
Birthdays (next week):	Taylor Triola, Rick Schroeder, Chris Ruder and David Bender
Acolytes:	July 13: Skye O'Halloran July 20: Jasmine Thatcher
Altar Guild:	July 13: Team I July 20: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	July 13: Angela Henry and Paul Littlefield July 20: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	July 13: Wilma Tully/Bobbie Wells July 20: Regina Ardini/Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	July 13: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe July 20: Bill and Regina Ardini
Pledge Clerks:	July 13: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown July 20: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

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Coffee Hour Hosts: July 13: Summer Schedule  
July 20: Summer Schedule

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

Genesis 25:19-34

Psalm 119:105-112

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

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  
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
(July 6, 2014)

### "Dancing the Dance on the Card"

I've been reading this historical novel that takes place during the Civil War. There's this one little scene in which a young woman goes to a ball, and her dance card gets filled up quickly, mostly by a certain young man. If you don't know what a dance card is, it's a card young ladies would carry at fancy dances, and they would fill in names of the men they would dance each dance with. What I did not realize was that the type of dance was also listed, so that you knew the first dance was a Waltz, the second a quadrille, the third a schottische and so on. It was all pre-programmed.

So, I'm reading this, and I'm thinking, "What if you don't want to dance a schottische?" I don't even know what a schottische is. Heck, the only dance I know is to stand there and sway. Back then, you couldn't go to the bandmaster and say, "Let's skip that and go with another minuet."

No, you either dance the dance on the card or you sit. You don't get to pick what's going to come next, and you can't prevent things that you don't like (because somebody else is going to want that schottische).

This reminded me of another but wildly different literary reference - or really a movie reference - one you may know. In The Lord of the Rings, the Hobbit named Frodo has to bring

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a powerful and evil ring back to the mountain where it was forged, where he must destroy it. In a bleak moment he tells the wizard Gandalf, "I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened." Gandalf, with apostolic wisdom, says, "So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."

Life is like that - you don't get to pick your dances - or your circumstances. There just isn't a choice in everything, despite what advertisements tell you. What we get to choose is not so much our circumstances but how we respond to them.

The scriptures we read today speak to much the same thing - facing the circumstances we are given and deciding how to respond.

You may not get that from the reading from Genesis at first. It's the story of a servant who is told to find a wife for Isaac. It's an impossible job, but he gets it done in the end. What interests me is what happens next. Rebekah, the woman, is given a choice in whether or not to go with the servant to become Isaac's bride. Granted, eventually her family will choose someone for her if she's too picky, so her choices are limited. But Isaac doesn't even know anything about the bride until she's presented to him. He doesn't live anywhere near his father, so one day, this servant simply shows up and says, "Here's your new wife."

We may forget, but the practice of choosing spouses for children was, and to an extent still is pretty common around the world. You simply don't get a choice in whom you marry. Those are your circumstances.

All they get to decide is how they will live with this stranger who is now a permanent part of their life. In Isaac's case, it says he loved her.

So one of the lessons we hear today is, you can't pick your circumstances, only how you respond. Will you rage and rail against them, or will you work with what is placed before you?

Another lesson, also dealing with the dance card, comes from our Gospel. Jesus says to the gathered crowd, "You're like kids in the marketplace. We play for you and you won't dance. We wail and you won't mourn."

He's addressing a group of people who are complaining about his eating with sinners. He says, "You will complain no matter what. John the Baptist fasted, and you said he had a demon. I eat, and you say I'm a glutton." No matter what the circumstances, they were going to complain - they were bound and determined to find something wrong and make it their battle cry.

At this point, you might think the lesson of this sermon is: Stop whining. Whatever happens, just don't complain. Ever.

That is not it.

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But there is a difference between either being railing against your fate, wishing things weren't the way they are, or finding something to complain about in everything - and facing what is ahead with faith and hope.

We live in a complex and dangerous world. Not only is there plenty of violence to go around, but we're constantly faced with situations that try our souls. It could be as simple as a flooded basement, as intimate as a failed relationship, as troubling as a mountain of debt, or as broad as a new law. The world comes at us big and small from every angle.

There is much wrong with the world, and sometimes what is required is to point out that wrong and work to change it. It is wrong to discriminate against someone because of their race, gender or orientation - and it is only because people stood up against these form of discrimination that they are less accepted today. It is wrong to heedlessly pollute God's creation, yet it is addressed only when people stand up. It is wrong to abuse the poor, yet it continues to happen except when people of good will see the wrong and call it out.

Going back to the dance analogy, the world plays lots of music, some of it not very pretty. The question is, when it DOES play its music, will we complain because it's a dance we don't like - or get up and see what we can do? Jesus suggests we get up and dance. It doesn't matter if we don't know the steps: he says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me."

So life is never perfect in this world, but if we keep our eyes on our dance master, we will be able to dance whatever dance is on the card. Amen.