

St. James' E-pistle

September 30, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

October is a busy time for us. Inquirers classes are in full swing as we prepare for the Bishop's visit in December. Sunday School is going strong. Stewardship is gearing up for our Fall pledge campaign. The Vestry is finishing its analysis of the Mutual Ministry Review while at the same time preparing for Diocesan Convention. We are in the middle of our Organist/Choir Director search (well, analyzing what we are looking for), and of course, we are just about to begin our 7th season of the Historic Graveyard Tours.

With all that, it's easy to forget less pressing but still important religious observations. I am thinking of the Feast of St. Francis and the Blessing of the Animals.

For the past few years, we have not had any particular celebration of St. Francis. I have stayed after church for a few hours so people could go home and bring their pets by for a blessing if they wanted, but that hardly addresses the real power of St. Francis.

If you're unfamiliar with this 13th century saint, he's well worth getting to know. A spoiled rich young man, he went off to adventure only to discover it brought him no joy. Devoting his life to God, he found poverty but also grace, peace, mercy, joy and love.

Traditionally, churches have a blessing of the animals because Francis had such a high regard for them as creatures of God - almost a Dr. Dolittle of the middle ages. However, he is equally (and more importantly) known for his care and advocacy for the poor, the alien, the sick and the outcast.

This Fall, we get to bring some of these elements together. One of the characters in our Graveyard Tours this year was one of the very first lawyers for the SPCA. From that work, he went on to advocate for fair treatment for the poor, especially for child laborers. I don't want to equate him with St. Francis in any way, but perhaps the church's celebration of that saint influenced his future advocacy. Who knows?

This is all the more reason, I believe, to celebrate St. Francis anew. That is why I am planning a celebration of St. Francis at the 10:00 AM service on October 9. Weather permitting, it will be held outside in the Meditation Garden. Given the season, even if it looks like it'll be a warm day, I would bring a jacket. In the event of rain, of course, we will do as we have in the past, and hold it in the Parish Hall.

I know there are always complications when we do something outside. Chairs, for example. And sound (which we've got covered this year). But sometimes, even in the midst of a busy

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season, it's worth stopping, sitting outside together, and blessing God for the wonders of nature, our four legged/feathered/finned friends. Sometimes, it's worth the hassle to look at the example of one who was so utterly in love with God that people thought he was a little odd.

May we all be that kind of odd! Hope to see you out in the Garden on October 9.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

No Nursery: There will be no Nursery available this Sunday at the 10:00 AM service. The O'Hallorans have to be out of town. It will resume the following week.

Graveyard Tours Start: The Tours are finally here! On **Saturday, October 1**, we will have our dress rehearsal for the press. Then next **Friday, October 7**, the tours begin in earnest! Please take some fliers and share them. Put a picture of the flier on your Facebook page (or other social media). Give people Graveyard Tour business cards. Make this event known to everyone you know.

Remember, these Graveyard Tours are not only our biggest parish fundraiser of the year, they are also evangelical outreach - because as they share the stories of past members, they also share their struggle with living out the Gospel. It's a winner all around.

Graveyard Tour Sponsors: In the past, we have invited sponsors to contribute toward the production of the Graveyard Tours. This year, we have begun to feature the sponsors on our Graveyard Tour web page. It helps us if parishioners and guests patronize our sponsors and let them know that they heard about them through the Graveyard Tours. Check it out! And if you can think of anyone who might be a good sponsor, please let us know - or put the bug in their ear yourself!

Blessing of the Animals: It's been a few years since we've had a proper Blessing of the Animals during Sunday worship. But this year is the year! So, on **Sunday, October 9**, bring your pets of whatever size to the 10:00 AM service. Bundle up in case it's cold, but join us for a celebration of St. Francis' love for God's creation!

Troop 80 BBQ Chicken Dinner: Boy Scout Troop 80, which St. James' sponsors, is holding a BBQ Chicken Dinner on **Saturday, October 15**. It is take-out only. Because its timing conflicts with the Graveyard Tours, customers will pick up their chicken at the United Methodist Church between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. All tickets must be purchased in advance. If you'd like a ticket, please see Bill Fenwick (or any other scout from Troop 80).

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Acolyte Festival: Save the date - **Saturday, October 22** - for the Diocesan Youth Acolyte Festival! It's a full day of mostly meeting other youth, learning a few tricks of the trade, and in general having a great time. We're looking for all youth and a few adults to make the trip.

Committees That Can Use Your Help

Stewardship: The Stewardship Committee is a group that helps coordinate our fall pledge drive as well as keep the concept of Christian Stewardship in our consciousness throughout the year. Never a large committee, the group of typically three members has been quite helpful. However, this year two of the three members have had to leave the group; one to become a Sunday School teacher, and the other because she has to leave the parish for the next few years.

So listen to your heart. Is God calling you to this ministry? Though it is not a heavy burden, the impact of the committee is huge on the ministry of St. James'.

Churchyard Committee: Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

Episcopal Election Toolkit Available: It is the official position of the Episcopal Church to encourage all eligible members to vote in every election. We see it not only as part of our civic duty but as part of our collective life of faith. If we are not engaged in the community, then we are withdrawn - which is not the example our Lord showed.

To encourage enthusiastic and informed participation in the election process, the Episcopal Church has published an Election "Toolkit" with information such as what representatives are up for election, who your officials are, and what the issues of the day are. It includes the Episcopal Church's official position on several issues, which may be helpful in your deliberations.

The most important thing in the church's eyes, however, is that we all go out and vote! Here's a link to the "Toolkit":

<http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal/EpiscopaliansVote>

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Spiritual / educational websites to deepen your faith:

- Acts 8 Movement
- GrowChristians
- Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
- The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
- Virtual Abbey
- Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
- "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
- The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
- Anne Lamott (via Facebook)
- Jan Richardson - <http://paintedprayerbook.com> (Especially good for those grieving or interested in women's spirituality.)

The News of the Diocese

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."

- 2 Third Order of the Society of St. Francis
Also: Jewish Holy Day: Rosh Hashanah
Also: Muslim Holy Day: Hijra
- 3 St. John's Church, Getty Square, Yonkers
- 4 Church of the Holy Apostles, Manhattan
- 5 The Church of the Ascension, Staten Island
- 6 St. Francis of Assisi Church, Montgomery
- 7 Diocesan Mission Partnership with the Diocese of Central Tanganyika
- 8 St. Mark's Church, Chelsea

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

1. Candle for Peace

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Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

2. **The Mothers Prayer:**

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other
to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.

For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at
these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have
mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one
for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,

May this be your will

And let us say Amen.

Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dee, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson (brother of Mary Gabel), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, 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 (this past week):	Stephen Burkhardt, Franklin Santos, Antoinette Horne, Austin Horne, Bryanna Burkhardt and Daniel Ogden
Birthdays (this coming week):	Aaron Burkhardt, Justin Bohlmann, Ann Dingee and Robin L. Bohlmann
Acolytes:	October 2: Team 1 October 9: Team 2 (John)
Altar Guild:	October 2: Team II October 9: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	October 2: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris October 9: Lucille Ogden and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	October 2: Wilma Tully and Judy Douglass October 9: Donna Beyer and Deirdre Mae Micker
Ushers:	October 2: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher October 9: Donna and John Beyer
Pledge Clerks:	October 2: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright

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October 9: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass

Parish Cycle of Prayer: October 2: Dean and Patty Caswell, Fred and Kathy Champion
October 9: Clarence, Joann, Anna and Catherine Clark, Rich, Leighton, Alix, Sophia and Eden Ciferri

Coffee Hour Hosts: October 2: Audrey Horne, Charlessa Thatcher and Eric Zivadel
October 9: Jodi Triola, Patty Glancey

This Week's Lectionary

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

Psalm 37:1-10

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Luke 17:5-10

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

Sermon Preached on
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
(September 25, 2016)

"The Blind Eye"

There's a guy who hangs out at the exit of the Stop & Shop parking lot and begs. He's got a little sign that says "Please help." Have you seen him? Sometimes, if I get caught at the stoplight where he sits, I'll fish out a buck or two and give it to him. But I confess, I usually feel annoyed. All these little messages I've learned over the years start playing in my head: "He'll probably use it for drugs" (which I don't know), or "He's got no self-respect" (which I don't know) or "Why doesn't he just get a job? (Which he might be trying to do every day - only if you don't have a home, have a conviction, have Potsdam, or any number of other problems, it's really hard to get a job).

The thing is, I don't know anything about him, and I haven't taken to the time to learn. If I did, maybe I'd be able to help him find the help he needs. Sometimes, I hate preaching about care for the poor, because then I realize I'm preaching to myself. And that's not a sermon I like. But it's a sermon that's been preached for a very long time.

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Look at today's Old Testament reading. The Prophet Amos condemns the rich who live in luxury yet ignore those in calamity. He warns the rich to open their eyes. He says they sleep in the finest beds, eat the most expensive foods, lounge around amusing themselves - in this case with playing music - and in general having a good time while "Joseph" suffers. For reference, he uses the name Joseph (remember Joseph, son of Jacob who had the coat of many colors and whose brothers sold him into slavery?) As a sort of shorthand for Israel and Judah. The people of God, in short, suffer, but the power elite, political, economic, and religious, are living the life of ease. And he warns them that this turning a blind eye will not end well.

Just like the rich man in today's gospel reading in Luke.

When Amos refers to Joseph, he is talking about a whole class of people - the poor and oppressed in Israel and Judah, but in today's gospel, Jesus personalizes the concept to one single person. Lazarus. Well, Lazarus and the nameless rich man.

What's unique about their story? First, the rich man knows Lazarus' name and technically sees him, but doesn't see him for the person he is. He sees him only as the wretch to step over. Maybe the town drunk or fool - everybody knows the name and nobody knows the person.

Even after the rich man dies and suffers in hell (though Jesus wasn't trying to tell us exactly what life after death is like - it's a parable), he can't see Lazarus as anything but a tool to be used. He knows the name but still can't see the person. He thinks only of himself and his family - it's me, me, me. And that is the heart of his sin - it's my comfort, my needs, my family, my, my, my. He figures he deserves it because he's rich. But, of course, he isn't anymore. He fails to heed the warning - and Jesus says his siblings won't listen to Lazarus any more than they listen to Amos or the other prophets - if their hearts aren't moved by the sight of the suffering, what warning will move them?

What do we take from this?

Well, THERE'S STILL THAT GUY AT STOP & SHOP. And Veterans. (Meme that says we should take care of our veterans before any dirty refugees. Failing to note that there's more than enough money to care for all and have plenty left over)

Refugees (refugee sponsorship & support by individual parishes is something going on right now within our county). And Native Americans struggling to preserve what they've been left (and which is now being taken away yet again). And those are just for starters.

So, the first thing we can do is Open our eyes. We don't want to see many things - but we don't have the luxury of turning a blind eye. God does not allow that. If we do not see the suffering, it's because we choose not to. Because poverty, suffering and injustice are everywhere. It's in our town, it's in our nation, it's in the world, it's in the news.

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Yes, it can feel oppressive, all the suffering that's out there, but no more so than those who live in it every day. And Christ does give us the option of acting to alleviate suffering. Politically by encouraging elected officials to enact policies that help the poor rather than the rich. Economically by giving our own money for the care of the poor and oppressed. Religiously by not only praying with our words but with our actions, perhaps even considering joining other churches who sponsor refugee families.

We can choose to not see, or to explain away the poverty of others. But if we do, we truly are turning a blind eye. And we can't say we haven't been warned about that. Amen.