

St. James' E-pistle

September 6, 2013

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I am writing to you with an appeal. Would you consider being a participant in the Diocesan Indaba?

Indaba is a Swahili word for a concept of coming together, being together in order to work things out. What is worked out can be a specific problem or an undefined dis-ease. Indaba always involves respectful listening to each other.

Our diocese being as large as it is, we have real differences in how we view the world. A huge congregation in Manhattan with five priests on staff and thousands of parishioners does not have the same issues that a country parish struggling with one part-time priest and twenty-five worshipers on Sunday. There is fellowship, to be sure, but also mistrust and simple misunderstanding.

Bishop Dietsche has expressed a desire that every parish put together a team. A couple of folks have expressed interest, but as yet nobody has solidly committed. Caution is understandable because it is a significant commitment of time and energy. There are three weekends where you'll either be traveling or hosting. There's a kickoff meeting before that, and a de-briefing meeting after the visits.

Yet the payoff is huge. You get to meet new folks in wildly different settings and learn what God is doing through them. You get to show off what your church is doing. We get to all learn what's working and what's not, and perhaps most importantly, we get to celebrate the movement of the Holy Spirit in every setting.

Please contact me as soon as possible. The deadline is September 15, and it just so happens that Archdeacon Bill Parnell, who is organizing the Indaba, will be our guest preacher that day. By the way, if you want to hear some remarkable preaching, Archdeacon Parnell is your guy!

So call me maybe.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Diocese

Please consider becoming a Hurricane Sandy Recovery Volunteer. Staten Island's recovery team's goal is to restore 40 houses by the end of December. Volunteers are needed to accomplish this.

In addition, please keep all of our brothers and sisters who are recovering from Sandy and other natural and man-made disasters in your prayers. Just because the news is not reporting it doesn't mean that our neighbors are not continuing to struggle with a disaster's aftermath. Recovery time can take years before a "new normal" occurs.

The Election of a Bishop Suffragan: On Saturday, December 7th, our Diocese will elect its next Bishop Suffragan.

Please keep all who are involved in the process in your prayers:

"Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of all who shall choose a Bishop Suffragan for our Diocese, and all who offer themselves as candidates, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

2013 Training for Eucharistic Visitors & Eucharistic Ministers: Two training sessions have been scheduled for lay people chosen to serve as Eucharistic Visitors and Eucharistic Ministers. Both one day sessions will be given on a Saturday from 9:45 am to 2:30 pm, with lunch included. The fee for each participant is \$15.00, and scholarships will be available.

Training will be hosted on September 21, 2013 at Zion, Wappinger's Falls and at Christ Church of Ramapo, Suffern on October 5, 2013. If you wish to register, or have any questions about the training, please contact Arlene Bullard at abullard@dioceseny.org.

The News of the Church

8:00 A.M. Service: This week, the 8:00 service will be held at the Chapel.

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Graveyard Tours. Tickets for this great event are available on the website at <http://stjameshistoricgraveyardtours.com>. If you're on Facebook, check out our new Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/StJamesHistoricGraveyardTours>.

The 2013 season of the Graveyard Tours will start very soon and we are still in need of Tour Guides! Being a guide is a fun and easy way to help with this major fundraiser. Please sign-up in the narthex.

Vacation Bible School—A Start to the School Year: With the goal of growing our children's ministry by making Sunday School a fun time to share with friends (and a special place for experiencing Jesus' love), we have decided to use this year's VBS program as a start to the school year.

Instead of an open house this year, we will hold a "Mooving" Welcome back celebration at our very own "Hay Day" farm in the parish hall. This will be open to all parish children and the community, pre-k up to 5th grade, on Sunday, September 8th from 9:00am to 2:00pm. A small portion of the program will even take place during the Sunday Service!

Please sign up by filling out the registration form at the end of this E-pistle and dropping it off in Church or calling the parish office. (Students over 5th grade who wish to help out and participate, can sign up too.)

Please invite your grandchildren, cousins, neighbors, and friends to a day of "Growing in Friendship with Jesus". Register at the church or call the parish office at 845-229-2820. Hope to see you there for an "udderly" good time!

Upcoming Sunday School schedule in brief:

Sept. 8th – Sunday Bible School – Welcome back program – 9:00-2:00

Sept. 15th – First formal day of Sunday School classes.- 10:00am

2013 Fall Concert Series. Join us for our 2013 Fall Concert Series, select Sundays this Fall at 3:00 p.m. at the Chapel. On Sept. 8, we kick off the series with the gospel sounds of our Artist in Residence, "Spirit of Unity". Our 2nd concert, on October 6, will feature three friends, but individual musicians, who will bring their Greenwich Village open mic repertoire to Hyde Park. The headliner of this trio is Randy Burns, who has been part of the New York City music scene since the 1960s and has opened for the likes of Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs and many others. On October 20 we welcome "The Cupcakes", a trio of folk musicians from the Hudson Valley. Finally, we will wrap up the series on November 17 with the folksy sounds of local favorites, "Betty and the Baby Boomers".

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Tickets sold at the door: \$12 ADULTS, \$10 SENIORS, FREE children 12 & under. SEASON TICKETS: \$2 discount each ticket for all four concerts -- call for info. Complimentary Refreshments. Call the Parish Office at 845-229-2820.

Community Garden: Anyone is more than welcomed to come and visit and see for themselves how this wonderful Community Garden has evolved in just our second year.

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, Kurt Burkhardt, George Buso, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Jack Gordy, Harold Hall, Jolanda Heijenbrok, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Joan Oetjen, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Deborah Porach, Don Renten, John Robinson, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, 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:	Tess Manning, Laura Seagren and Annabeth Gausepohl
Acolytes:	September 8: Team II September 15: Team III
Altar Guild:	September 8: Team Number III September 15: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	September 8: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris September 15: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden
10 a.m. Readers:	September 8: Donna Beyer/Justin Bohlmann September 15: Patty Caswell/Nancy Montero
Ushers:	September 8: Donna and John Beyer September 15: Dean Caswell and Austin Horn
Pledge Clerks:	September 8: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown September 15: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
Coffee Hour Hosts:	September 8: Jodi Triola and the Eames September 15: Deirdre Mae Micker and the Gausepohls

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This Week's Lectionary

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

Sermon Preached on
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
(September 1, 2013)

"Campbell's Soup"

It is wonderful to be back here after so long away from you! Of course, being back means a little bit of readjustment. The other day, for example, Liz said, "So how's your sermon preparation coming along?"

And I thought, "Sermon?"

Really, while everything up here feels familiar, it also feels new - like we're beginning all over again. I hope it feels like that for you, too.

New beginnings, in a way, is what our faith is all about - the ability to leave behind the past and look ahead to the trail Christ blazes for us. Our very first sacrament of the church is all about this kind of new beginning - leaving the old behind and forging into a new life in Christ.

Which makes the fact that we have a baptism today especially appropriate. Today, we will welcome Julianna Rose Zocchi into the Body of Christ, into this new beginning that we also are embarking upon yet again.

It also makes our Gospel reading for today especially appropriate because in it Jesus teaches us one of the most important lessons we need as we begin anew. Humility.

Now, Jesus was talking to everybody present at a sabbath meal, and he's observed how they're all trying to get the best seats, the seats of honor - probably seats closest to the host that will make them look important (because the host is the leader of the Pharisees).

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Jesus says, Go to the lowest seat, sit with the "unimportant" people. That way, if nobody notices you, you're not embarrassed. And if someone does notice you, they'll ask you to come higher.

Then he goes on to say, in fact, don't even invite people who can do something for you. Don't just sit with the "undesirables," invite them into your home. Give only to those who can't return the favor - who will, in fact, make you look less desirable to the powerful.

So, lesson one in this new life that is following Christ: Don't make yourself out to be more than you are.

But the humility learned here is so much more powerful than that - so much better. Humility is what allows us to follow Christ in the first place.

Humility is that state of knowing, for example, that you don't know everything - and are willing to learn.

Humility is knowing that you can't get along in life alone.

Humility is knowing that you are part of something much bigger than yourself alone - and rejoicing in it.

Humility is even accepting a certain amount of discipline in order to be part of that something and make it work better.

When I was in High School, my English teacher was Mary Jo Ferguson. We were doing a section on poetry, and she had just introduced us to the glories of the Shakespearean sonnet.

What a ridiculous poem. I mean, 14 lines, iambic pentameter a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g. Hardly "The Hotel California" which had just come out. This poetry stuff was rigid and confining. Too many rules.

I fought with Mrs. Ferguson when she assigned us to write our own sonnet. Not only was it a dumb assignment - because I didn't want to do it - but who could say anything about anything in that small space?

Mrs. Ferguson, in her wisdom, said, "If you're clever enough, you can write about anything using the sonnet."

With an evil grin I said, "Anything?"

And she said, "Just do it."

So I wrote a sonnet about ... Campbell's Soup. I can't remember the details, but I remember adhering rigidly to the rules and making it as obnoxious as possible. It praised the tinny-ness

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of the can and the redness of the wrapper and the condensed tomatoe-y goodness inside. I was making sure Mrs. Ferguson would see how ridiculous the whole thing was.

Of course, a couple of unanticipated things happened. One - I enjoyed writing it. The rigidity forced me to think, to be creative, yes, to have fun. Two - Mrs. Ferguson liked it. I got an A on that poem, and she wrote something to the effect of "Beautiful" with a smiley face.

In a way, new beginnings, whether they be just coming back from a sabbatical or starting school or getting a new job or that biggest new beginning of all, entering into the Body of Christ through baptism - all new beginnings start with embracing that kind of humility.

Yes, it requires some conformity and discipline. When you become a member of the Church through baptism, for example, you accept some rules: You can't just do whatever you want in worship; You can't just ignore what the bible says, even if some of it seems strange or contradictory - you have to grapple with it as is; You can't just come to church whenever you feel like it - the expectation of attending worship is inherent in the discipline (or discipleship) that we willingly take on.

BUT - and this is big - embracing the humility of discipline, the framework that is the church, gives us more freedom than we can imagine.

Because like a sonnet, it gives you form but allows - even requires - creativity. You have the freedom with Christ to try new things, new ways to reach out, to think about God, to express who God is in your life, to see other people.

You get to experiment all the time and in your experimenting, you get to grow. You'd be amazed how much beauty and playfulness you can cram into such a rigid framework.

In order to understand the freedom of humility - of the framework or of the sonnet - think about an astronaut up on the International Space Station. Recently, one of the astronauts had a suit malfunction while on a spacewalk. The only way he made it back to the ship was by following his lifeline that anchored him to the ship. Without that anchor, he could not have had the freedom to go out into space in the first place.

The church is your anchor. It holds you fast to Christ even as it sends you out to explore, to learn and to love. And let's face it - we mess up a lot in life. We need the freedom of an anchor that says, "You're not cut off. You're not left alone - floating aimlessly. This will always be your home, your place of refuge and acceptance."

If you have the humility to accept it - to take the lower seat - you'll discover that you are soon soaring - or writing beautiful words about Campbell's Soup if that's where you're moved.

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Welcome to your new beginnings - OUR new beginning. Let us begin together humbly. There's a lot exploring and creating to do. Amen.